

Shadows of War

by gwb99

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Summary: As the Empire encroaches on UNSC space a secret task force of UNSC ships is sent to cause chaos in anyway possible, which for a small team of SPARTAN III's is second nature. But other darker forces are at work in the shadows. (Sequel to Fires Of War)

## 1. Chapter 1: Angels and demons

\*\*Surprise everyone! I'm back early. Or more importantly my story(s) is/are back early! :)\*\*

\*\*WARNING! If you haven't read my first story Fires of War you will not understand anything. Please if you haven't already read it.  
\*\*

\*\*Now I'm just going to say I worked on this unrestricted by anything since August 2 so I've had time to make this chapter the best it can be. Please note that this will not be the case for the rest of the chapters as I have school from September to June so I don't have as much time as I would prefer.\*\*

\*\*Halo belongs to 343 industries (Bungie forever) and Star Wars belongs to Disney \*\*

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><p><strong>Timeline: (Based on UNSC times and dates. Imperial records are in separate bullets.) <strong>

\*\*2511: SPARTAN II candidates are born.\*\*

\*\*2516: Anakin Skywalker is born.\*\*

\*\*2517: Doctor Catherine Halsey and then Lieutenant Jacob Keyes inspect SPARTAN II candidate 117. SPARTAN II's are kidnapped by ONI agents and replaced with flash clones.\*\*

\*\*2517-2525: Operation TREBUCHET takes place with the intent of quelling the growing insurrection. SPARTAN II training.\*\*

\*\*2525: Contact with outer colony of Harvest is lost. First contact and first engagements with Covenant Empire takes place.\*\*

\*\*2526: SPARTAN Blue Team is sent to the Corbulo Academy of Military Science to Evac cadets training there.\*\*

\*\*2531: Kurt SPARTAN 051 is secretly taken by ONI Section III to begin new SPARTAN program. SPARTAN III Alpha company begins training.\*\*

\*\*2531-2537: Alpha company training. Operation PROMETHUS takes place. Alpha company killed to the last man but completes its objective. SPARTAN III Beta company training begins.\*\*

\*\*2537-2545: SPARTAN III Beta company training. Operation TORPEDO takes place. Beta company suffers near annihilation but completes its objective. SPARTAN III Gamma company begins training.\*\*

\*\*2545: Silva Aventios is born.\*\*

\*\*2545-2552: Inner colonies are targeted. Gamma company training and deployment.\*\*

\*\*August-December 2552: Fall of Reach occurs. SPARTAN II's almost completely annihilated. Events of Alpha Halo take place. Battle of Earth. Events of Delta Halo take place. Prophet of Truth is killed by Thel Vadam on the Ark. Master Chief Petty Officer John-117 MIA. Human-Covenant war ends.\*\*

\*\*2554: Clone Wars begin. UNSC Outer-most colonies are re-terraformed.\*\*

\*\*2554-2556: Clone Wars take place.\*\*

\*\*2556: Order 66 takes place. Beginning of Jedi Purge.\*\*

\*\*June 19-28 2557: Events of \_Fires Of\_ \_War\_ take place. Task force Shadow is authorized and given green light.\*\*

\*\*June 29 2557: current time.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life...<em>

\_...It goes on"\_\_

\*\*ROBERT FROST\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"They died hard, those wonderful men. Fighting till their last. They were foolish, they were arrogant and they were brash, and I loved them."<em>

\*\*Imperial Captain Hal Trume, on the subject of the sailors under his command.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC colony of Gryphon, capital city of Vance 24:00 hrs, April 14 2545UNSC Military Calendar/Local Time\*\*

It was a peaceful night as always. Some Snow still littered the ground and the city was for the most part asleep. That all changed when the sirens started. These weren't police sirens or fire trucks or ambulances, no these were sirens no one wanted to hear.

Air Raid sirens.

The four year old girl sleeping in the rose coloured room in the two story house on the outskirts of the capital heard the sirens and woke up, wanting to tell her mommy and daddy and older brother about them. So she got out of her bed and cautiously made her way toward her parents room. She looked at the pictures on the wall and at the light she wished she could turn on but she wasn't tall enough to reach it. There were pictures of her and her brother as babies, of them at the beach, in the pool and at the park, playing with friends and with their parents. Happy.

When she got to her parents room and opened the door she ran to their bed, tapping her mother on the shoulder.

"Sophie? What are you doing up, it's late." Her mother said, not even turning around to face her daughter.

"Mommy, mommy do you hear the sound mommy? What is it?" Sophie asked, tapping her mom's shoulder again.

"Sirens, dear. Most likely a drill by the Army again. Come on let's go get you back to bed." She wordlessly got out of bed and guided her daughter out of her room and into the hall.

They were at the window adjacent to the bathroom when they heard the explosions.

The mother and girl stopped in their tracks and turned to stare at the window. The city was burning. More explosions were heard and were then joined with the sound of Anti-Aircraft fire, the yellow rounds shot off into the night sky, trying to kill the unseen assailants.

"Jonathan! Jonathan get up! They're here!" The mother screamed as a man in his late forties ran out of the parents room, a teenage boy ran out of the room adjacent.

"Are you two okay? Sophie come here sweetie. It's alright, it's okay..." The father, Jonathan said as he tried in vain to console his now crying daughter.

"The Covenant are here? Cool!" Exclaimed the boy.

"Bradley!" Yelled the mother, turning to face her son.

"Sorry mom." The boy, Bradley said.

"We have to get to the spaceport, the Army and Marines will be there and we can escape." Jonathan said, picking up Sophie.

"We have to change or atleast get something's packed- " the mother started to say.

"No, there's no time, look outside Margaret!" Jonathan yelled.

The four of them quickly made their way downstairs and were about to exit the house when the Phantoms appeared.

The two transports hovered ten meters off the ground to deploy their ground troops. These were mostly elites with two Jackal snipers as support. The aliens killed those that were on the street. Fortunately no people in the houses were killed, yet. This included the family of four, who upon seeing the gunships ran back inside.

The family Huddled in their living room. Three elites came through the door, their light blue armour signifying them as just minors. One of them went upstairs while two stayed on the ground floor, searching for humans to kill. The family tried to hide as best they could but with Sophie crying it was inevitable that the elites found them.

Bradley, filled with a stupid and misplaced sense of heroism attempted to rush the first elite and got close enough to wrap his arms around its stomach. The elite picked Bradley up with one arm, holding him by the neck as the rest of the family watched the elite place its plasma rifle to his head and fire.

The plasma burned his head clean off his body, decapitating him. The elite threw him to the side and moved in to kill the rest of the family. It shot Jonathan in the ribcage and the neck, killing him. Margaret (the mother) attempted to shield Sophie from the alien but was swatted aside and stabbed by the second elite with an energy dagger.

The third elite came back downstairs and was about to shoot Sophie when the wall behind them blew up. The elites turned to face the destroyed wall, thinking that the humans armed forces had appeared. In reality their Phantom gunship had mistook the sound of plasma fire as an indication the Covenant soldiers were in trouble. Upon seeing that no harm had befallen them the ship moved off to kill some helpless humans.

The first elite was about to go in for the kill when it paused mid-step and felt its back before dropping dead, a knife had cut into the elites spine, killing it. The other two elites forgot about the crying four year old and began to search for their assailant. The second elite suddenly jerked its head back. A figure de-cloaked on the elites back wearing green-grey armour with a gold polarized visor. The visor was rather large covering the whole front of the helmet while the armour itself was slim and had almost no outside armour plates.

The figure slit the elites throat before jumping off the elite and narrowly missing an energy dagger meant for its head. It turned toward the last elite and ducked, avoiding another swipe from the elites dagger. It then kicked the elite in the knee before bringing

its knife toward the elites head getting it straight in the mouth. Blue blood gushed out of the wound and covered the figure as it twisted the knife before yanking it out and quickly cleaning it before sheathing it.

The figure turned toward the headless corpse of Bradley then the burned corpses of Sophie's parents before turning toward Sophie and slowly swiping two fingers over its visor where its mouth would be before cloaking and disappearing again.

Five minutes later when a squad of Marines found a shell shocked Sophie and asked what killed the elite all she said was an angel.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Frigate <em>For The Fallen <em>21:00 hrs, June 29 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Ship Standard Time \*\*

I woke up sweating and breathing heavy which was normal for me. Even so Julianne asked if I was alright which I replied in the affirmative.

The briefing I had attended three hours earlier had been more or less a 'meet and greet' where the officers for ground teams would meet each other so they had a closer bond and were more trusting of each other when they were deployed. As SPARTAN teams were small everyone in Rapier had been in attendance.

There was the hulking form of Major doese. The Helljumpers CO Aswell as captain Philips, his aide.

There was the quiet and cautious Captain Jennings, the woman's unit of Rangers we would work the most with. Also in attendance was her Radio-man Specialist Frost.

There was Chief Petty Officer Macallen. He was in charge of a team of Navy Special Operators attached to the ship.

And finally there was SPARTAN IV Fireteam Cerberus. They were something of a loose cannon. Officially assigned to the Fallen's sister ship What Once Was they had come to meet the units they would work closely with.

In my opinion they should have been assigned to a Prowler.

"Where's Emily?" I asked, noticing my squadmate was absent from the room.

"She's at the range. Said there's a new gadget to test or something." Julianne said, not even looking up from her datapad.

"Isn't that your forte?" I asked.

"Normally, yea...But this one's a weapon."

"O-Kay then thanks Julie." I said, calling her by her nickname, which she hated. I left before she started to shout.

As I walked through the ship I saw the occasional sailor but mostly Army Rangers and ODST's, which was odd because we were on a ship, not

a land based installation.

"Pierre, where are the ships crew?" I asked the ships A.I. Who appeared moments later on a pedestal beside me.

Most of them are tending the ship, why do you ask G-317?" He replied in his French accent.

"just curious. I've never seen so little of the crew on a ship before."

"Well this class of ship is new, yes, so the crew want to check everything themselves." He replied.

"Oh."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Prowler <em>From The Brink<em> 21:15 hrs June 29 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Ship Standard Time\*\*

The cell was small. Very small. Even the ISB had bigger cells for their prisoners I thought.

I had been a Captain once, Captain Hal Trume. My ship was the finest in the fleet. The Imperial Star destroyer \_Jedi's Folly. \_ I was a proud individual serving not the Empire but the soldiers and sailors under my command.

Now what was I? A man who had lost his ship, who had watched it explode along with everyone aboard. When I had seen that I had made a promise.

I would find the families of those men and women, and I would tell them how their sons and daughters had served their government and their planets and hope that me just being their would ease their pain.

I knew that the man who had caused all of this would have to pay aswell. The man who's orders I had fallowed to the letter and who had caused so much pain and death.

His name was Admiral Yoseph Dreadler and force willing he would die.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>STAR LINE YACHT <em>ETHEREAL BEAUTY<em> 09:30 hrs June 29 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Galactic Standard Time\*\*

I wasn't content to just sitting around which I had been doing so I when't to see Captain Eduardo.

I found him in the mess hall with two more of my guards. I had a guard behind me, his DC-15 carbine ready to be used at a seconds notice.

"Commander Aventios." The Captain said, nodding.

"What happened to 'm'lady' Captain?" I asked, puzzled.

"We all know who you really are. You are Jedi Padawan Silva Aventios. Your master was Jof'es Gid and you fought on Munnilist during the last weeks of the Clone Wars. Your master was killed by clones of the 356th legion, your own men in compliance with order 66. You escaped by hiding in a separatist medical station and then sneaking aboard a republic cruiser." He said. "You don't need to hide that weapon from us." He said, pointing to my lightsaber. I quickly checked that it was hidden before asking him how he knew I had it on me.

"I've worked with Jedi in the past Commander. I know they never leave it behind."

I nodded before realizing we were near Naboo.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Frigate <strong>\_\*\*For The Fallen\*\* \_\*\*21:30 hrs June 29 2557/ UNSC Military Calendar/Ship Standard Time \*\*

I had made my way to the Firing Range and upon seeing Emily made my way to her, but not before grabbing a weapon of my own, an MA5K2 suppressed carbine. I walked to the booth beside her.

Unlike me she wore her full SPI armour, helmet and all.

"Sophie." She said, in greeting.

"Emily. What weapon is that?" I said, gesturing toward the pistol sized weapon in her hands.

"This thing? It's an 'M1-57Plasma-Projector'. It's based off Covenant plasma weapons. But I dont really like it. Brings up to many memories."

The weapon was all black and looked like a cross between a Covenant plasma pistol and an M6H. The front was split like a plasma pistol but everything else looked human.

"Where do you think we're going to be deployed?" I asked, changing the subject.

"I don't know really. Atleast we didn't need Cryo. I hate it."

"Yeah, hey remember during training when we did a Cryo exercise you puked on Fireteam Saber's leader when we were unfrozen." I said, chuckling a bit at the memory.

"I remember you puking on CPO Mendez." She said. "And he made you run naked through the camp."

"That wasn't my fault okay, I can't control my puke." I said defensively.

Emily was about to continue but a message on the intercom stopped her.

"GENERAL QUARTERS, ALL HANDS TO GENERAL QUARTERS, ALL NON-ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL REPORT TO PREDETERMINED AREAS!"

"Let's go Sophie, move!" Emily yelled. We quickly returned our weapons and ran to our room, passing fully armed and armoured Marines and Damage Control teams.

when we made it to our room we found Julianne quickly putting her armour on. While this was happening the intercom still blared away.

"ALL PILOTS TO YOUR SHIPS, ALL PILOTS TO YOUR SHIPS, FIRETEAMS CHARLIE TO INDIA HEAD TO THE HANGER..."

"What's going on?" Julianne asked, donning her helmet.

"I don't know," I said putting my own armour on.

"I hope I didn't put my armour on for nothing." Julianne said.

In an hour General Quarters was lifted. It turns out this was the first time the fleet had ever had to use their stealth systems, something about passing a civilian ship. However we were called to a briefing. We had found our first target.

The briefing room was crowded. Kevin and Michael were already there, as were all the other unit commanders, the Captain was there aswell as a woman I didn't recognize guarded by two ONI soldiers. \_Odd \_I thought.

"Welcome everyone, sit down. We have a very long briefing a head of us." The Captain said Before gesturing towards the unknown woman. "This is 'Dono' and she would be what some of you oldies like myself call an Innie." He paused. "However we have no record of her on our systems and the simple reasoning is that she isn't from UNSC space. That's right ladies and gentlemen she hates this Empire as much as we do. She is helping us." Dono stepped forward.

"Hello. The planet we are currently going to is called Naboo." She pointed toward a Navy technician who was manning a projector. When the screen came online I saw a lush green planet with seas and mountains dotted around it's surface. "The Empire has a garrison of around 500 000 troops around its surface with help from the local security forces. Naboo's ruler, however seems to have anti imperial sentiments." Dono continued.

"The plan is to drop Captain Jennings Rangers with two attached mortar teams along with Fireteam Rapier four Kilometres from the capital city in the forests. You will make camp there and preform guerrilla style warfare on the enemy combatants. Fireteam Rapier is to make contact with a government official and attempt to make an alliance in secret. You will have further intel when you get dirtside. Questions, comments, concerns? No, good. The ODST's will drop along with Fireteam Cerberus on the other side of the planet. Dismissed." The Captain said.

It was another hour before we boarded the drop ships heading for the surface. The five of us would land an hour ahead and one klick away from the rangers main dropsite.

When we landed in a lush forest we quickly fanned out to check for hostiles before waiting for orders. Kevin turned to the rest of us

and very quietly said the best words I've ever heard.

\_ "Let's get to work Rapier." \_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>That's it folks! I just wrote a Whopping 3000ish words. Okay 3000 isn't much but still, it's a start, right?<strong>

\*\*Im asking you guys to give me OC's in the form of Silva's guards. They HAVE to be human or human clones. Aside from that go wild. But be prepared for them to die very horrifically.\*\*

\*\*Please review and give me your OC's, and until next time...\*\*

\*\*FANFICTION POWRES ACTIVATE! : ) : )\*\*

## 2. Chapter 2: Friends from afar

\*\*Hello everyone! I'm back. I spent most of my vacation in Mexico (And what little rest of the summer I had) working on this when I had time. Your welcome. ;).\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"They may just be the finest SPARTANS ever."<em>

\*\*Lieutenant Commander Kurt Ambrose. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Surface of 'Naboo' 23:00 hrs, June 29 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Ship Standard Time. \*\*

The forest we were in was vast, untamed, and especially foggy. Nighttime didn't help us either. If we were anyone else it would have been impossible to move, however our SPI Mark III armour had the latest in VISR technology making it appear as if it was daytime instead of night.

\_ "Radio check, Rapier." \_ I said. As Fireteam leader it was my job to make sure my team was okay and combat ready.

\_ "Rapier 2 reporting in boss." \_ Julianne, Rapier 2 said as she materialized on my left hand side.

\_ "Rapier 3 ready to rock and roll!" \_ Michael, Rapier 3 yelled. Even though we were in a private COM channel reserved for the Fireteam I couldn't help but quickly check the dense forest surrounding us for hostiles that might've heard his outburst.

\_ "Rapier 4 here. Good to go chief." \_ Sophie, Rapier 4 said as she de-cloaked to the far right of me.

I received a green acknowledgment light from Rapier 5. \_Typical Emily. \_I thought. \_She probably won't speak until we're out of the 'Red Zone'. \_

The red zone was our word for hostile territory, or to put it bluntly any shape of ground we didn't feel secure in.

\_ "Current ammo and supplies?" \_I asked. \_"I have Ten Magazines for the MA5K2. five mags for the M6C and one flash-bang grenade." \_I said. I liked to double check my teams ammo and supplies the moment we touched the ground so I could remember who had what and if we lost anything during the drop.

\_ "Same thing boss except I have my datapad updated with everything we know about the hostiles." \_Julianne said. As she was our technical expert I expected her to have updated her 'pad', she was also our resident scout.

\_ "Since you restricted us from bringing our special toys all I have is the same as you and Julie. It sucks by the way. What can I blow up with a flash-bang?" \_He turned to see our reactions. I slowly shook my head.\_ "Exactly, Nothing!" \_Michael said. As our explosives expert I knew he was mad about having no C12 on him but I was almost going to reprimand him if he kept this up.

\_ "I have the same as the rest of the team. I only have one can of foam though. Guess we'll have to share. And lighten up Mikey. Jeez." \_Sophie said. Patting her left leg which had a case of Bio-Foam strapped to it.

\_ "I have the standard MA5K2 but with an 4x smart-link scope aswell as an M6C, same as you Rapier lead." \_Emily said, de-cloaking beside one of the forests dense trees.

\_ "Good. I want a standard formation to the south, head for the Rangers dropsite. Radio silence from here on out unless it's an emergency." \_ I said, quickly doing a visual check of my weapon before pointing towards our objective.

We all cloaked again and headed out. Julianne whent first. About 10 metres ahead of the rest of us. I was second, followed by Michael to my back right then Sophie to my back left. Emily was 5 metres behind us.

As we were walking I couldn't help but feel like I was on Onyx again. The forest was eerily similar. Albeit a little less foggy but still quite similar.\_

><em>

Julianne yanked me out of my train of thought when she abruptly flashed a red acknowledgment light. \_Stop.\_

I quickly went over to her. Finding her crouched behind a bush.

she gave me the sign for unknowns ahead. Her thumb pressed into her palm with her other fingers inwardly curled. She then pointed toward three figures wearing dark brown uniforms and what looked like steel helmets who were on patrol. They were alert but not overly cautious or uneasy. Julianne flashed two amber acknowledgment lights. The signal for a SPARTAN team member to request orders.

\_ "Don't fire. Hold. Rapier on me. Quietly." \_I said\_. \_The rest of the team made their way to me and I quickly explained the

situation.

\_ "They will probably see us, sir. We have to take them out." \_Michael said.\_

\_ "I agree boss." \_Emily said. Bringing her weapon up to target the nearest unknown.\_

\_ "Sophie what do you think?" \_I asked. Staring at my teams medic.

\_ "Doesn't seem right chief, killing them and all. Your call though." \_She said. Turning to look at me.

"\_Five..."\_ I said.

\_ "sir..." \_She looked at me unsure

\_ "take them." \_I said, face expressionless behind my helmet. I heard the six suppressed rounds hit their targets and in less than five seconds all three unknowns were dead on the forest floor.

\_ "Rapier 2 check them for I.D."\_ I said.\_

She ran towards them, the photo reactive panels in her armour blending in perfectly with the surrounding forest.

\_ "I.D tags them as members of the local security forces boss." \_She reported\_. "Orders?"\_

\_ "Keep moving. I'll ask the Captain when we link up."\_ I said.\_ Motioning my team forward\_. \_

We made it to the Rangers dropsite in good time but they were already on the ground unpacking their supplies. I headed over to Captain Jennings and reported the three dead locals.

"This may make our job harder SPARTAN. Anyway your teams tent is over there along with the supplies you requested. Get pitching SPARTAN." She said pointing towards a folded up forest cameo tent. Five duffel bags were beside it in a row Along with sleeping bags. I thanked her before making my way towards my team.

"Alright our tent is over there along with all our supplies." I heard Michael give a small 'woo' from inside his helmet.

We spent the better part of 15 minutes pitching our tent and putting our supplies in it. We slept diagonal to the door with our bags at our feet. Perfect.

The rangers had their tents in staggered lines with squads digging foxholes 100 meters to the west, towards the city.

It was a standard deployment to be honest. The only thing that wasn't standard was our objective. We had to get into the capital city without being seen and get to the planet's ruler, without being seen then we had to secretly make an alliance with her and get out of the city, once again without being seen. \_Easy.\_ I mused. In reality I would have preferred one of the infamous suicide missions SPARTAN III's were known for to this. \_

><em>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Surface of 'Naboo' 09:00 hrs, June 30 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Ship Standard Time\*\*

I woke up on time as usual. Kevin was already up checking his armour's photo reactive panels while Sophie was trying to get Michael up, and upon him successfully awaking tackled Sophie to the ground in a small fit of anger. Emily was outside of the tent cleaning her weapon and calibrating its scope. I quickly did a check of my own equipment.

-Rifle. Check.

-Pistol. Check.

-Ammo for both. Check.

-Datapad. Check.

-Armour. Check.

"Rapier form up!" Kevin yelled, interrupting my checking. I quickly ran towards him.

"SPARTAN G-123 reporting as ordered Petty Officer!" I said, coming to attention.

"SPARTAN G-244 reporting as ordered Petty Officer!" Michael said, also coming to attention.

"SPARTAN G-317 reporting as ordered Petty Officer." Sophie said.

Emily came to attention but said nothing, as usual.

"We are heading into the city. Pack lightly it's just recon." Kevin said, a small smile on his lips.

"So do we get backup?" Sophie asked. "Five people going into a heavily guarded city alone seems alittle insane. Sir." She added.

"The Rangers will be on standby to assist if needed but yes we are going in alone. And lighten up Sophie, we were trained for the sole purpose of suicide missions So this is nothing." Kevin continued while quietly chuckling. "Remember that time on New Barbados."

"I don't forget dead friends, I thought you didn't either." Sophie said with a small hint of sadness in her voice.

I lowered my head and I saw Emily put a reassuring hand on Sophie's shoulder.

Kevin realized he had overstepped a line and started to apologize but Michael stopped him.

"We don't have time this guys. Let's go." He said walking in the

direction of our armour and weapons. When he passed Sophie he said something so quiet my helmets voice recorders barely picked it up.

"Don't forget they were our friends to."

We left the camp a half hour later and made the slow, careful journey to the city in a diamond formation with Kevin in the middle. None of us talked during the walk. About twenty minutes into our journey we left the cover of the forest and saw our objective for the first time. The city was vast but had a certain character that cities back home lack.

Most of the buildings were only two stories tall but were artistically crafted. If we hadn't been enemies of the state I would have de-cloaked and went to meet the populace, however the white armoured imperial troops patrolling the crowded streets made me remember why we were here.

I quickly looked at their armour and weapons. The armour itself looked pristine meaning the troopers themselves took pride in the armour or were forced to clean it. The helmet was somewhat bulky in the front but it wasn't a major concern. I however wouldn't trade my SPI armour if my life depended on it, ever. The weapons were small black carbine sized rifles with a scope of some kind. Easy to use in an urban setting like this and small enough to be clipped to the troops belt as two troopers walked past me.

Aliens of all shapes and sizes were all over the place buying and selling goods and just talking with each other. My finger was dangerously close to pulling the trigger and it took every ounce of my strength to not gun all of the aliens down. I knew the rest of the team felt the same way, because through all the oaths and orders and missions all every SPARTAN III wanted to do was kill Covenant or anything remotely non-Human. There was talk of an alliance between us and the sangheili but I thought the idea was laughable. Even the average grunt would hate the idea and would never agree.

We had gone into an alley to orient ourselves. I pulled out the datapad and checked the map of the city the STARS satellite had made up. We were about a block from the palace. I let a small smile creep onto my face. Perfect.

It was still early morning and I doubted the Queen or whoever we were supposed to see was up yet but I followed orders and completed objectives even if I had to wake her myself we would speak with her.

We carefully made our way towards the palace and snuck past the guards. There was almost an incident when Sophie noticed a small crying girl and wanted to help but Kevin stepped in, reminding her that we weren't here for crying little girls, we were here to talk to the planets ruler.

We found the Queens chambers and quickly devised a plan, still keeping a wary eye out for anyone that would spot us. Our invisibility wasn't perfect and the panels could fail at anytime.

"Rapier 3 and 5 guard the door. Rapier 2 and 4 on me." Kevin said,

quietly opening the door.

We made our way silently through three rooms before finding the queen. She was remarkably young most likely only twelve or thirteen, she had dark brown hair and green eyes and, to my embarrassment was completely naked from the waist up and only had an undergarment on with no bra. Handmaidens quickly picked out clothes for her but she took her time. I quickly averted my eyes before checking my photo reactive were still active.

"Uh chief. What do we do." Sophie asked, clearly embarrassed.

He took a second to think. "head back a room and I guess wait." He said. Making haste.

It took ten minutes but she quickly came out. Kevin de-cloaked in front of her and hesitantly knelt. Sophie and me did the same.

The queen was taken aback by three armoured figures kneeling in front of her and she nearly fell over in surprise. She screamed as we appeared from thin air. Her handmaidens quickly stepped in front of her and pulled pistols from their robes, telling her to stay back. I prayed they wouldn't shoot and it turned out my prayers came through as the queen told them to lower the weapons after some very tense moments.

"Don't shoot, we come as allies." Kevin quickly said as he lowered his weapon to the floor.

"Who are you?" She asked.

"We are trying to ascertain the same of you M'lady. Are you the Queen?" Kevin asked.

She hesitated before confirming it with a nod.

"I am Queen Apailana of Naboo. And seeing as you haven't killed me yet. Of which I think you've had more than one chance I ask you for your reasons to disturb me." She said.

Kevin stood up and motioned for Sophie and me to do the same.

"I ask again, who are you?" She said.

"I am Petty Officer First Class SPARTAN-G097 and these are my colleagues SPARTANS-G123 and G317 and our superiors would like to propose a meeting. Secretly, of course." Kevin said.

"And your superiors would be..." the queen asked, from a frightened child into a politician.

"The United Nations Space Command, the military arm of the Unified Earth Government. Ma'am." Kevin continued, not missing a beat.

"And this United Earth Government wants a secret meeting why, Petty Officer."

"One of our colonies was destroyed by the empire. We want payback and we know you have anti imperial feelings. All we ask is that you consider an alliance and know that any talk of 'rebels' is really us.

Your men will not be harmed if we can help it."

"We?"

"There is a larger group of our forces on your planet and we have ships cloaked in orbit. Forgive us for the intrusion." Kevin said.

"This is...a lot to think about. How will I contact you for the meeting?" The queen asked.

"Send a guard with your response during an imperial patrol, have them place their hands above their head and kneel on the ground when we dispatch the others."

I then realized Emily had flashed three red acknowledgment lights, the signal to retreat. I quickly brought my weapon to bear on the door. Most likely startling the guards and frightening the queen but that wasn't my concern.

"Rapier 5, what's your status." Kevin asked over the com.

"Two hostile drones coming down the main corridor, be advised they're fast." —

"Have you been compromised?" —

Emily was about to reply when we heard a weapons discharge. —

"Move Rapier. Number five what's your status?" Kevin asked as the three of us headed towards Michael and Emily.

We opened the last door to find Emily taking cover behind a pillar. She turned towards us, giving a small greeting via the 'SPARTAN Smile'

"Hostiles have me pinned, sir. Michael's trying to get behind them. They have shields, like domed things. Weapons have no effect." She said.

I engaged my cameo in an attempt to run to another pillar and managed to get a good look at the drones.

They were walking on three thin legs with a hunched body and a ball like shape in the middle, in all they looked really flimsy but the energy shields really helped. Nothing we fired got through.

"Rapier 3 are you in position?" Kevin asked, firing at the drones.

"Yes sir and I have a pack of C-12 for each of these piles of junk."

I saw him appear behind the drones and slowly place the explosives inside their shields before cloaking again. He appeared beside me and held up ten fingers. If I hadn't known him since December 2545 I would have never known what he was doing but to me it was clear.

We ran as fast as our legs could carry us and ended up jumping out of

a window to avoid the blast which occurred ten seconds after the explosives were placed. After that we faded into the city and made our way back to base.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Planet of Kamino, Tipoca City, 12:00 hrs, June 30  
2557UNSC Military Calendar/Galactic Standard Time \*\*

\_This latest batch was a joke! I'll never understand why the army is clones, are ordinary people not good enough? a thousand of these clones would never stand up to a common rebel, never mind a full fledged professional army! \_I thought bitterly.

My name was Johnssa Hilleg and I was head instructor for the Republic's and now the Empire's clone trainees on Kamino, and upon learning that the Empire had found a new civilization and had destroyed one of its worlds I was quite furious. I wasn't a stranger to worlds made barren by orbital bombardment or the concept of war itself. I was mad, however because my trainees didn't know what to expect from their opponents.

I would have continued my silent rantings had I not been interrupted by one of my aids.

"Colonel Hilleg, sir. We just received this from the garrison on Naboo. They have requested an additional company to bolster their strength in light of a failed assassination attempt on the queen." he paused to place a datapads chip into a hologram projector, an image appeared on the projector. "These are images of the assassins, sir. Aswell as all the tactical data we've gained on them, for your viewing sir." The aide said before saluting and stepping out of the room.

I stared at the image with a small hint of pride and of worry. The image was most likely taken from a droids photoreceptors but I could see the figures quite clearly. There were four of themselves, one of them was in the open aiming and firing their weapon, a slugthrower as people called them here perfectly while running towards cover. The other three were either in cover or in the midst of firing. I stared at the weapons they held and the armour they wore. It was SPI armour. The symbol of a SPARTAN III and the last thing so many covenant troops never saw.

I turned away from the image and walked towards a closet in the far corner of my room and upon opening it saw a set of armour almost identical to the ones the 'assassins' were wearing. The only differences were that mine was matte grey and had signs of battle all over It. There were burn marks along the chest piece and forearms and the gold visor was cracked. I smiled, knowing atleast some of my SPARTANS were still fighting.

I made it my goal to help them in anyway possible because somewhere, deep down I knew I wasn't Colonel Johnssa Hilleg...

I was Lieutenant Commander Kurt Ambrose.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Sooooo, how was that? <strong>

\*\*I have a beta (I think) So thank you for beta'ing half the chapter theotherpianist\*\*

\*\*(I wanted to get this to you guys before I go back to school so I only have half the chapter beta'd) \*\*

\*\* I realize I kinda skipped out on how Rapier got away but I decided to just end it there.\*\*

\*\*I'll explain what happened on New Barbados later in the story but your all welcome to take a guess. Nothing specific like 'oh I think it's little Timmy from around the corner' just say if you think the dead friends were fellow soldiers or civilians.\*\*

\*\*Also Kurt! I'll explain how he's here later but he will factor in I promise you. \*\*

\*\*Until next time please review and favourite/follow this story if you haven't already. Please.\*\*

### 3. Chapter 3: Hit and Run

\*\*Hey everyone! It's me. \*\*

\*\*Shoutout to a random guest who was really exited about the partnership of myself and theotherpianist. theotherpianist personally said you seemed 'enthralled'. If you read his story (which I assume you do) you'll see some familiar faces in his story. Five to be exact....\*\*

\*\*Also I'll have a Q/A 'chapter' that I'll constantly update so if you have a question just ask. I'll respond as soon as I can. that'll be up after I get a guest review for this chapter. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>To<em> \_codename: Piped Piper\_

\_From codename: Safecracker\_

\_Date sent 09/13/52\_

\_Encryption level: Omega \_

\_Lieutenant Ambrose. I assume you received the after-action report from operation STINGRAY? Ackerson deemed the operation a success. I don't know about you but ten out of fifteen NAVSPEC operators dead doesn't seem like a success to me. The loss of more than half of Group Hammer is a stunning blow. There is good news though. Hammer managed to destroy the covenant's refinery on site. ONI SECTION III has authorized shipment of Mark III armor to Hammer and hopefully the rest of the company.\_

\_Please see the attached files if you have any questions\_

\_Captain Andrew Delli, ONI SECTION III\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>ORDERS FOR UNIT E-13-HFEnforcement, unit 13, Home Forces\*\*

\*\*Commander Wilkus Vander\*\*

your units orders are as follows:

1. Find and preform reconnaissance on the assassins that threatened the queen.
2. Arrest anyone suspected of aiding them except tier 4 level officials, they will be dealt with directly by ISB agents.
3. Quell any signs of uprising among the local populace, the Venator class star destroyer False Flag has given command of a company of its infantry and an armoured brigade to your forces to use at your leisure.
4. Root out these 'Shadows' and eliminate them. They are \*\*priority one targets.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong><strong>SPARTAN Sophie-G317, Outskirts of Naboo capital city, 0300 hrs, July 7. 2557UNSC Military Calendar/ Local time\*\*\*\*

"your relieved, corporal." I said to the Ranger on duty. He nodded.

"Watch out for yourself. SPARTAN. Don't want to lose our advantage." He said.

I smiled under my helmet. "Copy all, corporal."

This was my first time on sentry duty and I was somewhat nervous. It was mostly because we had know idea what was on the planet. A branch breaking might signal an animal or an enemy. We had to be careful.

A few minutes passed with nothing out of the ordinary, then a half-hour. I was starting to get sleepy. As soon as I realized this I instantly swept my rifle across my sector, unpleasant memories coming to mind.

"Hey Sophie, how'ya been?" I froze, there, leaning on a tree was a SPARTAN clad in SPI Mark II armour, an M7 hanging loosely by its side.

"Identify yourself!" I said. My weapon aimed. I knew who it was and that was why I was aiming down a fellow SPARTAN: because this SPARTAN was dead.

"Don't remember me? Come on Sophie, it's me Ellie." The SPARTAN, Ellie said.

"Your not real. I saw you die, back on New Barbados. Your a hallucination." I said, my rifle still aimed.

"Maybe, maybe. But then again, who's to say your not dead

either?"

"Because...because I'm not. I'm alive, I know it!" I said back. I have to end this, I had to shoot. I closed my eyes and fired. When I opened them Ellie was gone. Within seconds a squad of Rangers were around me, sweeping for targets. The squad's leader approached me.

"Sitrep?"

"I saw something. It was probably an animal." I said.

"Still." The squad leader turned towards his men. "M'cord your on point. Let's see if we can find whateve. The SPARTAN hit. Your relived, we'll take it from here." He said to me. I simply nodded. Ellie's last words at the forefront of my mind:

\_who's to say your not dead either?\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Emily-G045, Outskirts of Naboo capital city, 1540 hrs, July 7. 2557UNSC Military Calendar/ Local time\*\*

It had been one week since our arrival planetside and we had quickly begun attacking outposts and isolated imperial units.

We were currently cleaning our armour and weapons after one such attack, alongside the Captain and her radio-man. The base was in shifts of one platoon staying at base camp to rest and rearm and one platoon was either on guard duty or attacking predetermined targets.

"Worst plan ever, of all time." Michael said. "Who made that plan anyway? A five year old?"

"It was one of our worst." Sophie replied.

"No, that time in training during capture the flag. That was the worst." I said.

"Which ti-...oh yeah that was horrible." Michael said.

"You mean when you used me as a shield to grab the flag?" Julianne asked.

"Yeah, that time." I said with a smile. Julianne threw her empty MRE package at me which I easily dodged.

"You missed." I said, however from behind me I heard one of the Rangers yell.

"Hey, what the fuck. I just got this cleaned!"

"Stow it Grif! Your armour looked like shit anyway." Another Ranger said, loosely holding a shotgun. I noticed his rank was that of a sergeant and quickly turned to Julianne.

"Now look what you did. You got that poor Ranger yelled at." I said in an innocent tone.

"Specialist Grif over there? Don't worry about it, his sergeant has it in for him anyway." Frost, the radio-man, said.

"Oh, well in that case it's fine then, right?" Julianne asked.

"shh. It's on." Frost said, turning up the volume of the radio. In the first raid we had managed to gain some imperial radio equipment which we soon learned how to use and subsequently used to monitor imperial units. Specifically ones that were about to be attacked.

\_ "Rancor 1-2 this is Rancor base, radio check, over." \_

\_ "Rancor base, Rancor 1-2 we read you loud and clear, over." \_

\_ "Copy that. Keep us advised, over." \_

\_ "Roger roger base. Wait I see something in the trees. HT-2863 hold position! We are imperial stormtroopers. Come out of the trees and identify yourself!" \_The trooper manning the radio said. \_ "Come out or we will fire!" \_

We then heard a sound that could only be the mortar crews firing. We all knew the target.

\_ "Incoming! Hit the dirt! Corporal find out where these guns are!" \_

Some of the Rangers were listening to their own radios to so they could hear the battle from the attacking Rangers perspective.

\_ "Magrath keep your machine gunners supressing them, assault teams go in three...two...one, go, go, go!" \_

The Rangers plan was simple. The Rangers with SAWs and rifle grenades, which were one each per squad, would lay down suppressing fire when the artillery stopped, While the three other members would jetpack into the enemy lines and go into melee. Because they were so often in CQB distance Rangers had access to weapons no one else in the UNSC would use. Like for example tomahawks, machetes and a personal favourite of mine, the AS-40. A fully automatic cut-down shotgun with ten rounds per clip, able to be attached via the magnetic clamps on the leg armour in place of an SMG or pistol.

\_ "Hostiles behind the first vehicle, team three shift your fire to the first vehicle!" \_The Rangers platoon leader said, yelling orders to his men.

\_ "Copy last Blackjack 1 actual, shifting fire." \_

\_ "Blackjack stand down, all hostiles neutralized. Pack up and move before enemy QRF get here." \_The Rangers platoon leader said, then to Captain Jennings: \_ "Blackjack 1 returning to base, two of my men are wounded, one critical, shiny got her pack mid-flight, head trauma. And one of the SAW's needs a new barrel, over." \_

\_ "Copy that Blackjack 1, medics will be on standby to receive

wounded." \_

\_This has been one hell of a week. \_I thought as the Rangers strode in.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Private Yale Strauss, Venator class Star destroyer  
<strong>\*\*\_False Flag\_\*\*\*\*, en route to Naboo\*\*

"The worst job ever on this kriffing ship and I have it, just my luck!" I yelled in between counting the hundreds of standard issue blasters meant for the ground complement, of which I was apart of.

"Strauss, shut your force-stanged mouth you worthless piece of-" my Platoon Sergeant started to yell.

"That's quite enough, Platoon Sergeant." Another voice said. I turned to find my company executive officer. he continued. "Private Strauss you have been transferred to Corporal Yikkies' squad. Report to him at once."

I couldn't help but smile, Yikkies' was the most liked trooper in our platoon, however no one really treated him like a friend, more like a mentor. he was apart of some planets militia during the Clone Wars and was drafted into the Stormtrooper corps so that there were experienced NCO's available. He had fought in one of the worst battles of the war and it had made him rather depressed. I'm pretty sure all he wanted was to be home again and not killing every being he met.

I quickly saluted before heading to the mess hall, where anyone from the corps would be.

I passed naval crewmen aswell as some guys from the armoured unit that would be heading to Naboo with my company.i said hello before continuing on.

When I arrived at the mess hall I spotted Yikkies' easily. He had brown hair that was beginning to turn grey and soft, honest hazel eyes. He was sitting alone in the far corner of the mess hall, holding a piece of paper. I had a curious look on my face as I walked over to him, the reason being that paper was so hard to come by nowadays that it surprised me. I had only seen paper once when I was young.

"Corporal Yikkies', sir?" I asked. He looked up at me for the briefest of moments. "I was transferred to your squad, sir. Private Yale Strauss, sir!" I said.

"Sit down, son." He said, gesturing to the seat across from him. I sat down and looked at him expectantly. When he turned his head and I saw his face I almost took a step back. Little good it would've done me as I was sitting down but his face showed a man who had lost something dear to him and was fed up with the world because he couldn't see it anymore. I realized he had been crying.

"Listen to me, and listen close." He said, almost growling. " I see that look in your eyes, your green as grass son So when we get to

Naboo and the blasters start firing you WILL listen to me and you WILL treat the squad as family, more than family because if you don't then all of us die! Get that!" He said, anger rising with each word spoken.

I nodded quickly.

"Good, good. Who was your last NonCom?" He asked, his tone changing.

"Corporal Hunds, sir." I said.

"He's a good man, I heard he put you on weapons duty." He replied, mentioning my previous job.

"No sir, that was the Sarge." I said. He smiled.

"Ah. I knew Hunds wasn't that evil. You'll do alright here, son. now could you leave me be, please, go find the rest of the squad, I'm sure you know who they are. I just need to...I just need to think about some things." He said, staring at the piece of paper again.

I nodded and left, and as I was leaving I couldn't help but here him start to cry again and say very softly. "I'm so sorry Sabine." I was puzzled by this but said nothing.

I found the rest of the squad in the shooting range, practicing. I went over to the weapon rack and picked up an E-11 blaster before taking my place at the range.

Beside me was trooper JG-1243, Hiclie Kruppman. I had seen him around but didn't really know him, we had never spoke. He turned towards me.

"So Your the one who's been sent to replace that stupid clone, eh? What's your name?" He asked. I noticed that his accent was from the outer rim but I couldn't tell which planet.

"Yes I am. How did you know anyway?" I asked, a little taken aback by his 'stupid clone' statement.

"2304 overheard the XO and the Sarge talkin' about it." I nodded.

"Hey 43! Who's the new meat shield!" A voice yelled from behind us. I turned my head towards the voice and found myself looking at Zapp Adbrin, trooper XC-7676.

"I'm Priv-" I started to say.

"I know who you are. Your father's a kriffing admiral. 'hero of Condira' and all that. why are you here? you could have been an officer with a thousand servent girls and an estate big enough for a star destroyer. You. Don't. Belong. Here." he said, jabbing his finger with each accusation.

"I'm not on speaking terms with my father right now- I began. How does he know?

"I don't care if your not. The point is do you think you can come

here and act all tough and hardcore? Do you think you've earned the right to be here like the rest of us. Me, I know I've earned it and I'll go very far in the corps let me tell you and you know why? Because I care about my job And I know there's glory to be had in the Stormtrooper corps And you won't get in the way of that." he yelled. I nodded slowly.

"You think there's glory to be had here trooper? I'd look somewhere else." A new voice said. I realized it was Corporal Yikkies'.

"As if I'm going to believe that Corp. we all know you're an emotional wreck but you can't dissuade me. I was born for this." Adbrin countered. "It would be better if we could go fight the barbarians like the rest of the battalion instead of some stupid traitorous rebels."

"If you were born for killing innocent beings I'm rather worried." Yikes replied, his tone neutral.

"Sir?" I asked.

"What I mean is if you think this job is all fluff and parades then I have a reality check for you. This isn't about fighting back the horrible barbarians and evil rebels. this is about not letting what emperor Palpatine has come crashing down."

"But the barbarians attacked the exploratory fleet sir! They shot first!" Adbrin said, sure of himself.

"Wrong! The admiral in charge ordered the primitives to be arrested and their territory taken over! He ordered for them to be subjugated and enslaved, and when they fought back he ordered them to be killed. Get that in your head trooper! The empire bullies beings into submission and kills them when they refuse! You may think those barbarians to be animals like the propaganda says but they're not. During the war I was sent to Republic occupied seppie planets and you know what I saw? I didn't see monsters or demons or scum. I saw mothers and fathers and younglings and just plain beings. Not monsters like the propaganda said, and this won't be any different. Those 'barbarians' have mothers and fathers and younglings to. Remember that trooper, remember that your killing someones son or daughter when you pull the trigger." Yikkies' said before turning around and leaving.

For some reason I followed him, I needed to know why he was so depressed, he wouldn't tell me so I would find out myself. I followed him to the platoons hallway. (each platoon had a designated hallway for sleeping.) he entered his room but left the door open. I hid in my room which was across the hall and watched him leave. My conscience was kicking in now and I was douting myself, reminding myself I was better than looking at another mans private life. I saw Yikkies' leave and was about to aswell when I saw another trooper sneak into his room.

"What are you doing?" I asked to the trooper, revealing myself. the trooper turned. "None of your concern."

"I think it is. You're stealing from my squad leader." I shot back.

"So you're that new guy then, huh. I'm Kal Tosh by the way, and I saw you follow Yikkies' before so you're no better than me. What were you looking for anyway?" he asked.

"A slip of paper Yikkies' had with him in the mess. I want to know what's on it." I replied.

"I'm lookin' for that aswell...if I steal it you won't tell, will you?"

"Not if I can read it, no." What are you doing you stupid fool! I thought.

"Good. I'll be right back then." Tosh said, sneaking into Yikkies' room. It took about a minute and two close calls before Tosh finally came out holding a paper envelope.

"Did you get it? I asked, eyeing the hallway.

Tosh nodded. "I know a place where we can read this in private...let's go." I followed Tosh to the very back of the ship and found myself in an observation room of sorts.

"The Jedi needed a place to meditate, and because this is an older ship this was built." Tosh explained. I could see the stars in all their majesty here. I always liked the stars. "They don't have these on the newer ships."

"Alright...let's get reading shall we?" I said. More like ordered. This is not good. Your better than this!

Tosh stuck his hand into the envelope, pulling out two pieces of paper. "One's a picture, the others a note. Here." He said, handing them to me.

><em>

"Don't you want to read it?" I asked.

"Nope! I just took it to get Yikkies' riled up! Thanks for taking the blame for me!" Tosh yelled, running away.

"Wait! Stop!" I yelled after him. "You no good piece of poodoo!"

I then turned towards the picture and note.

The picture was of a young human woman. Possibly in her early to mid thirties sitting on a park bench, she had black hair and hazel eyes. There were beautiful trees with their leaves turning yellow and orange behind her. A little girl no older than a year old sat on her lap. She had black hair and hazel eyes like her mother. In her little hands was a Mandalorian helmet painted a light pink on the top and grey on the bottom, spilt by the visor. They were smiling and looked happy. Yikkies' family. I thought. I turned to the letter.

Dearest Vans

Have you heard about the other civilization they found on the edge of outer rim? It's all the Empire talks about here.

—Of course you've heard! You're a big brave soldier! —

—The bakery is doing well. I'm so busy with Sabine I haven't had time to work so I asked the neighbours kids to help out. I've made a deal with them. A quarter of the pay they make goes to them and the rest goes to us. I hope you don't mind. —

—I was putting Sabine to bed the other day when she asked about you. She said. "Mommy I miss daddy. Where is he?" I couldn't respond. I NEED you. Your daughter needs you!. Please as soon as you can come home. —

—Sabine's started walking! Can you believe it? I wish you were here with us. I know you are needed but I can't help but wonder why they had to pick you. There are plenty of other big strong men here. We miss you. —

—Sabine and I can't wait to see you again! Please write back.

—

—Your loving wife, Eveni —

I stared at the letter for what seemed like hours, reading every inch and making sure I hadn't missed anything. I was angry, no I was furious! I was furious at the pathetic waste of an officer that had let this 'rebellion' grow freely. Adbrin was right. I could of had a thousand servants and a large estate. (I already had the latter) and provided my father was in a good mood I could have the commander in charge of the Naboo garrison shot by firing squad. Hell \_I'd \_shoot him myself. The upper echelon of the empire had no right to go and draft Yikkies', take him away from his family and send him to fight. I hid the envelope from my fellow soldiers when I walked back. I placed the envelope with everything inside it back in Yikkies' room. Then turned to go to my own. We would be at Naboo in a few hours and I needed some sleep, however sleep would not be nice to me today as I found myself dreaming of home, where I went by a different name.

\_Home...how I miss it.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Planet of Balvra, near the capital city of Liavis, 5:30 PM, 13 of June Balvra calendar/Local time\*\*

\*\*\_one year earlier\_\*\*

I stared at the mountains and rivers of my home. No matter how many times I looked at them. I then looked to the beautiful girl. \_No woman. S\_prawled on the blanket beside me. Her brown hair and blue eyes mesmerized me. \_

><em>

"Stop...Yale stop. Not now."

"Why not?" I asked.

"your father might-."

"My fathers not here. Annette come on."

"No...just...it's not right. It doesn't feel right, I mean." Annette said.

"why? There's no time like the present." I argued.

"no...I really should be getting home." She said.

"Fine, fine. Let's go." I said, somewhat irritated. We walked through the park and got to my car. As my family's very influential on the planet i was given only the best. Including the cars I drove. It was a newer model Roch-34. I personally loved the frame and body of the car. I opened the passenger door for Annette and when she was situated I went to the drivers side, got in and started the car.

We passed a lot of manors and estates on our journey back but paid them no mind. When we arrived at Annette's house I bid her a fine evening before continuing on my way. I drove though Liavis on my way home and quickly got a cup of caf before continuing my drive home.

When I reached my house I parked the car and quickly headed for the front door.

"How was your day, sir?" My butler asked as I stepped into the entryway of my manor house.

"Fine August, it was fine." I replied.

"Do you require anything, sir?"

"No, thank you. I think I'll just retire to my quarters tonight."

Of course, sir. Have a good evening."

"You to August."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Private Yale Strauss, Venator class Star destroyer  
<strong>\*\*\_False Flag\_\*\*\*\*, en route to Naboo\*\*

I awoke to the sound of yelling.

I opened my door to see troopers running towards the armoury.

"Strauss lets go! On your feet trooper!" A voice said, in the chaos I couldn't hear who it was but I headed their words as I instantly began running for the armoury.

"Whats happening." I asked, noticing Yikkies' in front of me.

"We're at Naboo, it's time."

I silently cursed. I looked around at my fellow troopers. Most of us wouldn't survive the coming weeks. I thought.

I quickly put my white armour on before poking up my E-11 blaster, strapping it to my side I then donned the helmet of a stormtrooper. Whoever the enemy was, they would soon learn to fear us, even if I

didn't want them to.

\* \* \*

><p><strong> Jedi Padawan Silva Aventios, Naboo capital city of Theed\*\*

I drummed my fingers on my leg. listening to the various figures in the lavish room. if there's one thing I don't like, its meetings, they just never accomplished anything. It had been a week since my arrival and the assassination attempt on the Queen. I had ran to her aid at the first sound of weapons fire then. it sounded so \_alien. \_After that incident the Queen's loyal officers and advisors were briefed on the meeting that occurred between her and the 'assassins'. The prospect of a never-before seen faction was unnerving. Two days after that the general public learned of the UNSC's existence. I was generally surprised to learn there was a civilization that by all accounts used slugthrowers as primary weapons. \_Surly they have blasters?\_ I thought.

"So. what do we know about them?" The Naboo captain of the guard asked. referencing the UNSC currently in hiding.

"Not much, I'm afraid. All we know is they wish to meet with us." the Queen said.

"But where, when? How?" there's to many unknowns, m'lady." I said. After my arrival I had explained to the queen my predicament and as I was, so far the ranking Jedi present I was made her personal protector. In secret of course. The Empire was everywhere.

"I've sent one of our men with the Imperial convoy currently leaving as we speak. hopefully he isn't caught in the crossfire." The Queen said.

"And if he is? Which side should he shoot? Empire or UNSC?" the guard Captain asked.

"Which ever one he needs to." The Queen replied.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>guardsman Filke Yuppion<strong>

The guardsman was nervously holding his pistol as he sat in the back of a troop carrier. every other seat was occupied by an Imperial Stormtrooper.

The carrier was with another two vehicles, both speeder bikes.

"Incoming, incoming! rebels in the trees. first squad dismount and form up!" a voice yelled as weaponsfire filled the air. the troopers dismounted one by one, forming a single line of crouched bodies. "fire at will. Watch yourselves, enemy artillery is firing." the voice yelled again as the troopers returned fire. Then as if by the flick of a switch it stopped.

The stormtroopers were uneasy, their blasters pointed downrange when smoke filled their vision. The troopers formed a ragged square

formation, with the guard at the center.

"Corporal take two troopers and flush those womp-rats out." the sergeant said. One trooper tapped two on the shoulders before all three moved into the smoke. about one minute later the rest of the troopers heard several screams and blasterfire. then they saw to their horror the corporal crawl towards them, his once pristine armor covered in blood. he made it to the closest trooper before some unseen force broke his neck.

"What the-" A trooper said as he was dragged into the smoke, his screams filling the air. His fellow troopers tried pulling him back or shooting his attacker. One shot hit it however and a golden glow in the outline of a person appeared. The offending trooper was quickly killed by another unseen attacker. In seconds the squad was killed, leaving the guardsmen alone. he dropped his pistol and placed his hands on his head, hoping he would avoid the the fate that befalled his 'comrades'.

To his surprise a figure appeared wearing green/grey armor with a golden faceplate. A rifle of unfamiliar design in its hands. Two more figures wearing identical armor appeared beside the first, weapons raised.

"Are you a member of her majesty's royal guard?" The first figure asked in a modified voice.

"Y...yes, yes I am." The guardsman said.

"Tell your queen we wish to meet at this location in five hours. She may bring one guard of her choosing aswell as one advisor. if there is any treachery we have orders to kill her...don't be late." And with that the figures disappeared, leaving the guardsman quite scared and confused.

\* \* \*

><p><em>To codename: Piped Piper<em>

\_From codename: Goblin\_

\_Date sent: 09/13/52\_

\_You received the report, then? I'll be honest with you Kurt. I didn't think any of them would come back alive. I'm glad to see that I was at least partly wrong. Still that's the highest casualty rating for a mission like that. I'm glad the spooks green-lit the armor ,though. It'll give the rest of the company a fighting chance. They'll finally be armed like SPARTAN's. It took six hundred of them to die for the spooks to get better armor...I'm beginning to wonder who's the real bad guy here. Us or them?\_

\_I'll send you the relevant files for Delta when I get the chance.\_

\_ From: Chief Petty Officer Mendez\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>That's all, folks! <strong>

\*\*I'm only 250 words from a 5,000 word chapter. maybe next time then, eh?\*\*

\*\*Once again a big thank you to theotherpianist for being my ever diligent beta. I couldn't have done it without you! (well I could've but it would be filled with mistakes and such)\*\*

\*\*Just so you guys know the messages at the beginning and end of the chapter are from 2552 detailing an operation of parts of Gamma company.\*\*

#### 4. Chapter 4: Castle

\*\*Hello everyone. I have a very special announcement to make! Myself and theotherpianist are in a mutual partnership! theotherpianist made a small letter so that all you people could know this is official.\*\*

To all readers of gwb99's work Shadows of war

My name is theotherpianist and I am also a FanFiction writer like gwb99. Some of you may have seen my work but I encourage you to read (and keep reading) this story for its enormous growth from where it first began.

It is my pleasure to be able to announce publicly a partnership between himself and I that will extend beyond beta-reading.

We are also pleased to announce to you that our stories will, for lack of better terms, share.

You can now expect things between our stories to be shared. I hereby give permission (for all that are plagiarism happy)

Thank you connoisseurs of the FanFiction world. We look forward to sharing more great things with you in the future

Sincerely,

theotherpianist

\*\*So yeah! I hope you guys enjoy and if you haven't read theotherpianist's story I highly suggest you do. Remember this partnership goes both ways. ;) \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Capital city of UNSC colony world Tempest, 12:00 hrs, July 8 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time \*\*

The invasion had been going on for around five hours now. It was inevitable, really. Tempest had only a small Pickett fleet of around ten ships and two barely operational orbital Defense Platforms.

The UNSC Navy hadn't gone down with out a fight, however, as the destroyed hulks of numerous Imperial ships floated around in orbit. Their remains serving as a grim reminder to naval captains of both

sides.\*\*  
><strong>

Now the capital was a hotly contested zone, it's tight streets and small alleyways almost mocking troop commanders. The imperial's couldn't get heavy armour into the city and were forced to rely on AT-RT's and speeder bikes to help the infantry, however the UNSC faced the same predicament. There would be no Scorpion armour support.

However this allowed the army and marines to try out their newer urban combat doctrines and weapons. One such weapon was the M-57A, more unofficially known as the 'Wolf'.

It was essentially an armoured, enlarged mongoose ATV with six wheels. The driver and gunner were protected from harm by a plate of armour fastened onto the front, encasing the driver. The gunner was protected from the front and sides but was completely open to attack from the back. An M247L machine gun protruded from the front controlled by the driver and a older version of the M41 Light Anti Aircraft Gun was on the top of the vehicle infront of the gunner's position, for use by the gunner. It was designed as a rapid hit and run armoured car however it seemed to be perfect for tight city combat. Right now a group of four (backed by a group of infantry) was currently mowing down a platoon of Stormtroopers to incredibly deadly effect.

"Gunner target the guy in the first story window, on your 3!" The infantry's squad leader yelled. The first wolf's gunner turned to fire blowing out the window when he did, killing the unlucky imperial and anyone around him. The squad of marines stormed the house, killing anyone who wasn't wearing green or tan fatigues before the group moved on to the next house.

In the ONI complex at the end of the city the UNSC wasn't having nearly as much success. The courtyard was wider then the streets, allowing for 2-M hovertanks to prowl about killing all they saw. The imperials had fought the hardest for this section of city and the stormtroopers had come to realize the best thing to do when confronted by the black armoured soldiers known as 'Trojans' was to blow anything and everything up with in a kilometer radius.

The stormtroopers were methodical in their advance, now. Their tanks slowly moving forwards supported by infantry. All of a sudden the first tank exploded in a brilliant display of UNSC hardware. the surviving crewman jumping out and running for cover, only to be killed by an unseen shooter.

"Good kill Castle Four. I'm engaging." A figure hidden behind a support beam said. He moved out of cover behind the imperials and gunned the closest down. His navy blue MJOLNIR GEN1 armour glinting in the early afternoon sun as he proceeded to kill over a squads worth of stormtroopers before quickly moving back into cover. He keyed his COM, all the while exchanging bursts with the remaining stormtroopers.

"Titan Actual you're clear to engage."

"Copy that Castle Actual!" the voice on the other end said. "Marines! How do we go?"

While Castle Actual couldn't here the response he already knew what it was.

We go Feet\_ First\_ Sergeant! \_

\* \* \*

><p><strong> Lieutenant Jessica Miller, Office of Naval Intelligence site Bravo 6, Earth, 14:45 hrs, July 8, 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"I'm going to be late! Couldn't this go by any quicker?" I asked one of the marines at the security checkpoint.

"Sorry ma'am but no. With those "Imperials" being human and all ONI's being cautious. Can't say I blame 'em." The marine said "They are ONI, after all."

"Yes I'm well aware of how they operate Corporal. Damn spooks." I said as the marines finished their security checks. I was waved through and as soon as I was able I broke out into a sprint, shoving fellow officers and marines out of the way.

When I reached the waiting room the dumb A.I handling the Admiral's appointments had told me to wait as the Admiral was already in a meeting.

While I waited I thought she might aswell watch the T.V. There was the usual holodrama's and reality shows but what caught my eye was an ad for the Military.

It depicted a trench, basked in smoke on some unknown colony, plasma and rifle fire crisscrossed overhead while the body of a recently deceased soldier of an unknown branch, either army or marines lay dead. his hands firmly grasping his rifle in a death grip. Then from the smoke came the figure of a SPARTAN II. its green armour casting an ethereal glow on the battlefield. It knelt by the soldier, retrieving his tags before motioning to someone off screen. The rifle fire above the trench intensified as the SPARTAN loaded a new magazine into its rifle before hopping over the trench, followed by a group of marines. Then the screen went black before displaying the UNSC flag. the narrator telling the viewers to 'join up and fight'.

They had been playing that ad and others like for years. To boost the fighting strength of the military. A twenty seven year long war's going to deplete your soldiers, no matter if you win.

"The Admiral will see you, now." The A.I said.

"Thank you." I said, walking into the Admiral's office.

" 1st Lieutenant Miller. Good of you to come." Admiral Osman said, her hands holding a datapad. I came to attention, my body ramrod straight. There was a saying in the lower echelons of ONI;

'\_When in the presence of CINCONI don't fuck up'.\_

"I assume you have the files I requested?" Osman asked. She didn't

call me to 'At Ease' as was customary.

"Yes ma'am. I have them right here." I knew this wasn't about some files. It was much larger than that.

"Good. What do you know of a Task force SHADOW?" Osman said, her face betraying no emotion.

"Not much ma'am. I don't believe that's in my field of expertise." I replied. Though I DID know of them. I had handled the task forces' plan and had come up with the idea to use rangers.

Osman scrolled down her datapad. "1st lieutenant Jessica Miller, formerly SPARTAN-B301 of SPARTAN III Beta company. Pulled out of the company by lieutenant Ambrose three weeks prior to operation TORPEDO." I froze. "Am I correct?" Osman asked.

"Yes ma'am." I said. My body becoming straighter.

"You were sent to ONI section I as a negotiator for insurrectionists. We have need of your services again Lieutenant. You will head to the colony of Tempest and extract two SPARTAN's, designate Castle team. You will then rendezvous with task force SHADOW and help...negotiate a treaty with the natives of an imperial world."

I gulped. "Your transport will be the UNSC \_Rainbow. \_You have been given a personal A.I to assist you. Sabrina, come on out." Osman said. If the head of ONI was briefing me I knew this was big. Very, very big. An A.I appeared 'wearing' the uniform of an officer from ONI section I. The A.I had shoulder length hair and a rounded face. It saluted Osman, then me.

"Hello. I am CTN 0984-1 Sabrina, at your service lieutenant Miller."

"Now that that's all done with I believe I should remind you that we are essentially fighting the Covenant again, just in another form. I don't believe I need to talk about Harvest." Osman said. I winced. Harvest had been recently terraformed again. Most of its surface was still uninhabitable and there had been only one city on the planet. Right now it was being used as an imperial staging area so they could attack the colonies.

It was essentially a game of cat and mouse. The UNSC knew where to attack but didn't want to risk leaving the colonies undefended.

"No ma'am." I said.

"You're dismissed." Osman said.

I saluted before grabbing Sabrina's datachip and turned and left. I had a ship to catch and SPARTAN's to obtain. As I had in Beta company years before I said a quick prayer heading to my quarters to get my things. It would be a long trip.

\* \* \*

><p><strong> Lieutenant William Gunther, Capital city of UNSC colony world Tempest, 15:00 hrs, July 8 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

The Helljumpers were long dead. Their weapons were scattered about, their armour burnt and destroyed and their bodies torn and mangled.

It had been three hours since Castle had engaged the imperials, supported by the aforementioned Helljumpers.

William was currently staring at one via his helmets enhanced optics suite. The man held his combat knife loosely, his visor was cracked and there was a hole in the middle of it. An imperial Stormtrooper was rummaging around in the mans pockets. Will contemplated putting a round in the offending troopers head but decided against it on the grounds that it would reveal his carefully concealed position. While he wasn't a sniper by trade he was comfortable with it and had taken an SRS99-S5 as soon as he was able.

He scanned the grounds, searching for targets to take out when he found the perfect one. A man in a black tunic with nothing more than a pistol at his hip instantly identified him as an officer. Will waited for three seconds, using the time to calibrate his scope. He mused on a saying he had heard.

\_ "The only lord and saviour on this planet is me and my rifle. All it takes is the pull of the trigger and a man's dead. That's all it takes." \_

The saying held true as when Will fired the rifle the man was literally torn apart by the 14.5x114mm round. His body turning into a fine pink mist. The imperial's had traced the shot, however and were closing in on him. He fired the remaining three rounds in quick succession before switching to his MA5D and downing three more stormtroopers with quick bursts. He then ran towards an overturned Warthog LAV, his shields flaring every time he was hit. He then quickly popped out of cover, killing a stormtrooper about to throw a grenade. The ensuing blast incinerated three nearby troopers and threw four more to the ground. All of a sudden the troopers were dead as gunfire from behind eliminated them. Will looked towards the sound of the shots and saw his squadmate down stormtrooper after stormtrooper with precise bursts from her BR85 Battle Rifle. The two SPARTAN's soon made there way to each other, killing imperial's as they went.

After what seemed like hours of fighting they're ammo was beginning to wear thin. this was only solidified by the shout of Castle four. "I cant take much more of this! I'm five 'till empty!"

"I've got four myself. plus my pistols." Will said referring to his two M6G pistols.

"Toss me one. I'm out for everything." She replied. Will handed one of his pistols to her, before focusing on the imperials. There was only a few troopers left now, however the next thing that came into view put a damper on any hope Will had in winning. An imperial 2-M hovertank came around a corner. its main weapons turning to fire on the two SPARTAN's. Nothing the SPARTANS had could break through its tough armour.

Will fired a burst from his rifle before turning to Castle four. "Castle four fallback. We cant do anything to that tank." William was

about to fallback aswell when a trio of missiles obliterated the tank. A Pelican Dropship painted in the colors of the Office of Naval Intelligence appeared. Its back was facing the two SPARTAN's and when it opened a quartet of ONI marines came out. The squad leader approached the SPARTAN's.

"Sir I have orders to extract you for another op!" The man yelled over all the gunfire.

Will briefly looked towards Castle four before turning back to the sergeant. "Copy that. Castle four on the Pelican, double time!" She nodded and ran onto the ship. soon after Will did the same followed by the marines.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lieutenant Jessica Miller, aboard UNSC Prowler <em>Rainbow<em>, in orbit over Tempest, 16:48 hrs, July 8 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

I was rather nervous. The two SPARTANS seemed ...different. These weren't SPARTAN IV's. SIV's alway had an air of overconfidence and cockiness. These SPARTANS displayed none of that. They had that look all SPARTAN III's and II's had. They knew their limits and because of them people had died. They knew loss and pain and they were filled with trapped emotions that desperately wanted to get out but would never be able to. The SPARTAN wouldn't let them. \*\*

><strong>

I waited at a conference room relatively close to the hanger, alongside the Captain.

I had briefly looked up a small file of Castle team. I wanted to know who I was dealing with. These were the only two survivors of the team. The rest had been killed in action during an operation against the Covenant. A waste.

When the SPARTANS came in I was surprised. I knew those faces. I knew them. From where I don't know but I knew them.\_

"Sir. Castle team reporting as ordered, sir." The leader said. He had navy blue and ice blue MJOLNIR GEN1 armour with a Air Assault helmet with a black visor. He had several ammo pouches attached to his armour and a Biofoam dispenser on his left leg.

"Good to see you in one piece, SPARTAN. The lieutenant here is in charge of you now so you report to her. I need to see we weren't followed. I'll take my leave." The captain said.

As soon as he left I started talking. "At ease, SPARTAN's. I'm lieutenant Miller. I'll be your CO for the duration of this operation."

"What is the op, ma'am?" The other SPARTAN asked.

"We are currently heading towards a UNSC task force. The task force has made contact with members of the imperial government and we are to negotiate an informal alliance with them In the hopes they can give us supplies and a base to attack more imperial targets." I said. "There is already a SPARTAN team on the ground but without someone

versed in negotiations it has been hard going. The team, along with some army rangers has been attacking small imperial convoys and bases on the planet."

"So we're going to reinforce this team while you negotiate with the natives, right ma'am?" The leader asked.

"Correct. You will be given more information when we reach the task force. Quarters have already been given to you as you won't need cryo. Just ask the A.I were to go. Dismissed." I said. Wordlessly the two SPARTANS filed out leaving me and my thoughts.

"Sabrina bring me the files on SPARTAN III Beta company. I don't care if I have clearance or not though I should have, seeing as I was apart of it." I said.

I wanted to know if a hunch I had was correct. I was never wrong. Ever.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Emily-G045, aboard UNSC Frigate <em>What Once Was, <em>08:30 hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time  
><strong>

"Come on. Is that the best you got!" The ranger yelled as Michael threw an uppercut. The ranger expertly dodged and countered Michael by grabbing his arm and flinging him across the ring. The ranger then threw himself on Michael and Michael tapped out after another few minutes.

We had been sent back to the fleet which was hiding on the far edge of the system to avoid detection. I had no idea why though.

Word was we were getting some ONI spook to help negotiate. Apparently there was another team of SPARTANS coming aswell.

"Fireteam Rapier please report to the main hanger." Pierre said over the intercom.

"Come on Michael." I said. Quickly heading to my quarters to put on my armour. Michael did the same.

When we reached our respective quarters I saw Sophie already inside, putting her armour on. She had everything on but her helmet. She donned her helmet then nodded to me before heading to the hanger.

It only took me around two minutes to put on my armour. I put my helmet on then I to went to the hanger.

Aside from the typical ground crew the rest of the team was already there along with the ships captain. Three other figures were also present, one of them was wearing the uniform of an ONI spook from section I. The other two, however...

\_ "Best assessment?" \_ Kevin asked through a private comm channel.

\_ "I think they're II's, sir." \_ Sophie replied.

\_ "Fantastic. ready to get shown up, guys?" \_Michael asked. I ignored him.

\_ "Alright, Rapier form up, come on." \_Kevin ordered. I quickly formed up off of Kevin, the rest of the team following.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Warrant Officer Chelsea Baker, aboard UNSC Frigate <em>What Once Was, <em>08:45 hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

\_ "What do you make of them?" \_Chelsea asked Will.

\_ "I don't know yet. Why, what do you 'make of them' Chelsea." \_He replied.

\_ "They seem, off. It took them ten minutes to get here and form up. They need to be faster." \_

\_ "It's not our place to judge. yet." \_

\_ "Still. these are III's. Mendez trained them. If they were this late for this..." \_

\_ "I'll wait to pass judgment." \_

\_ "I know you. You don't want to work with them, do you?" \_

\_ "I said I'll wait." \_Will replied, effectively ending the conversation. \_"One things for sure though. Their not Castle." \_

"Good. Now that everyone's here we can begin, or is there anyone else from your party that's not here, SPARTAN?" The ONI lieutenant asked the other team of SPARTANS. One of them stepped forwards.

"No ma'am, sorry for keeping you, ma'am." He said.

"Alright then. Team Castle meet Fireteam Rapier, Fireteam Rapier meet Team Castle. Use this time to get to know each other SPARTANS because you'll be covering each others' backs in a few hours." The Spook said. "Captain, I believe you wanted to show me something?" And with that they left.

"Fireteam Rapier Attention!" The other team's leader said. As one the five SPARTANS snapped to attention.

"At ease. I'm lieutenant Gunther, Castle one and this is Warrant Officer Grade 2 Chelsea Baker, Castle four."

"Sir, Petty Officer 1st Class Kevin-G097, Fireteam leader." The SPARTAN that had spoken before said.

"Petty Officer 2nd Class Julianne-G123, electronics specialist. Sir" The SPARTAN beside Kevin said.

"Petty Officer 3rd Class Michael-G244, demolition is my mission, sir." Another SPARTAN said. Chelsea could've swore she saw the

SPARTAN known as Julianne shaking her head. Bewilderment possibly. \_Chelsea thought.

The next SPARTAN to speak was small, really small. "Petty Officer 3rd Class Sophie-G317. Medic at your service." She said.

The last SPARTAN to speak spoke so quietly Chelsea had trouble hearing her even with her augmented hearing. "Petty Officer 3rd Class Emily-G045, Sniper."

"Sir, forgive me for sounding ungrateful but why are you here? I thought they wanted all SPARTAN II's at the frontlines." Kevin asked.\_ II's, us? \_Chelsea thought.

"we're not II's, Petty Officer." Will replied.

"Then what are you? your not IV's." Michael said.

"You'll just have to find out." Chelsea replied.

"How about a little challenge. If one of you gets beaten by one of us in something, you tell us what you are." Sophie said.

"And if we win. Then what?" William asked.

"What do you want?"

The two SPARTANS turned towards each other. "We ran dry on ammo during our last engagement. We want yours, all of it." Chelsea said.

"A...all of it. Seriously our ammo?" Sophie asked.

"Even your explosives."

Michael audibly groaned.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Corporal Simon Andrews, aboard UNSC Frigate <em>What Once Was, <em>09:40 hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time  
><strong>

"I hate you, you know that, right?" I heard my spotter say.

"I hate you too, Derose." I said. The two teams of SPARTANS had apparently had a falling out as they were fighting each other. It was a team deathmatch with a side of objective. To make the 'game' fair and to even the teams my sniper team had been assigned to assist 'Castle' team against 'Rapier' team.

It would be woefully unfair.

For them.

\_ "Castle Actual to Griffin Actual, you in position?"\_ The SPARTAN in charge of Castle team asked.

\_ "We're Helljumpers, SPARTAN. Yes." \_I replied almost sarcastically \_

><em>

The ship had a small cargo hanger near the back and seeing as we had nothing to do with it the captain had agreed to let us use the hanger as a training area for moc battles. Both teams were using TTR rounds so no one would get hurt. Though when you being shot by an SRS99-S5 it would hurt, TTR or no.\_

><em>

"I have eyes on two of them. They're bunched up by that cargo container. Your twelve." Derose said. I sighted them then aimed my rifle and after a quick recalibration of my scope fired. The round impacted the first ones shoulder jerking them back and around a corner. No kill.

"You missed." Derose said.

"I know." I turned towards my spotter, Private First Class Jonathan Derose, giving him the finger. He moved his arm away from his MA5D assault rifle to punch me lightly on the shoulder. "Mckenzie! Report!" I yelled, referring to the final member of our team. Private Samantha Mckenzie. She had been assigned rearguard for this op. Her weapon of choice was a BR55 Heavy Barrel. An older gun for sure but it could kill.

"Nothing here Corp." she said.

"Double Check!" Derose yelled.

"Still nothing. Like always."

While they had been bickering I had found the SPARTAN from before. "You're mine." I pulled the trigger and to my satisfaction saw the body crumple.

"Kill confirmed!" Nice shot!" Derose said.

\_Griffin Actual We'll contain them. Head to the objective." \_Castle actual said. As he said this a storm of gunfire was heard from our left flank.

"Do we have to do everything in this outfit?" Derose asked.

"Right, you heard him. Mckenzie your on point Derose your on our six. Move quickly and head for the NAV marker." I said, ignoring Derose as I hopped down from the container I had been perched on. Derose followed shortly after.

I turned towards Mckenzie, her black armour and visor concealing her almost perfectly in the low light. I say almost because her amour had a secondary colour of a deep orange. Though mine was a dark yellow almost gold and Derose had his in a dark red, almost maroon.

We all had black visors and of course the signature armour of the ODST's though with small differences. I had the binoculars common of an ODST sniper on my helmet aswell as a Global Positioning System on my wrist. Aside from that I had the regular kit. Derose had the complete regular kit with no deviations what so ever except for a sheathe for his Knife on his wrist. Mckenzie had an Up Armoured

headpiece. She also had the GPS aswell as the team's Biofoam because she was our medic.

We moved single file through the maze of cargo containers, our rifles sweeping the area as we moved. We didn't have to worry about the SPARTANS active cameo, thank god. I'd rather not get shot in the ass by an enemy I couldn't see. They didn't have their shields either, a small blessing.

"Coming up on a door." McKenzie said.

"Breach, quietly and quickly. Go!" I whispered. McKenzie slowly opened the door and walked in, rifle raised. The objective, a chrome briefcase was there, on a crate. McKenzie made a grab for it. but I quickly grabbed her hand, smacking it away.

"It could be booby trapped." I said.

"No way. They wouldn't do that, right?" Derose asked.

"They could, they are no good backstabbing SPARTANS." I said sarcastically. McKenzie picked up the case and began to head out. She got three steps from the door when she was shot in the head. She fell back, her 'dead' body falling on me. it was a good thing to as her body protected me from the four follow up rounds.

I pushed her off me before hiding behind the door frame, my rifle cradled in my hands. "Griffin, sound off!" I yelled.

"McKenzie's down! I was nicked in the arm. Fuck that stings!" Derose said. I saw him hiding behind the table the case was on.

"Find the shooter! Pin him down. We leapfrog this." I said, wincing as four more rounds hammered away at my cover.

All of a sudden a small cylindrical object landed next to Derose. A grenade.

"Grenade!" Derose yelled, jumping on it to cover the blast. It would have worked to, if it weren't for the five rounds that slammed into the ground around him throwing him off. The blast shot outwards engulfing Derose and sending a wave of paint in my direction. I braced myself as the paint hit me. When it subsided I saw derose was miraculously unharmed. He ran over to me, propping me up. My rifle was covered in paint, useless and everything from my waist down I couldn't move. I pulled my M7 SMG from its holster and prepared for the worst.

\_ "Castle actual this is Griffin actual. I have a man down and two wounded, we are combat effective for stationary actions only, over." \_

\_ "Copy that Griffin actual. hang tight. we have them on the run, over." \_

"Prop me up, by the table. Go." I said to Derose quickly. He did as I asked then went behind the door to my left.

"Bring on the hell." I said, aiming my M7 at the door. A figure ran past. slowly but at the same time fast, "I'm a sniper for Christ's

sake. I know its a feint." I yelled.

All I got in reply was a swarm of bullets. I couldn't move and thus was covered in paint. I was out. Derose fired into the doorway. I heard a small yelp from the other side. I saw my spotter inch out of his cover, moving towards the doorway. All of a sudden he was shot in the leg. He tripped which allowed one of the SPARTANS to calmly walk up and shoot him in the head.

The last SPARTAN walked over to me and squatted in my face.

"Good kills Helljumper. Good kills." It said. "Still you're not as good a-" The SPARTAN said only to be shot in the back by Castle actual. He came over to Mckenzie and picked up the fallen case. He then exited the room. A few minutes later I heard the cries of 'Game over' and found myself being unfrozen.

We won.

As my fellow ODST's managed to pick themselves up we crowded around eachother.

Mckenize was the first one to break the silence. "We got our asses kicked, eh guys?"

"No way, I killed two of them." I said as I punched her in the shoulder before walking towards my quarters to clean my armour. "And Mckenzie, just for that comment alone your our pointman for the next five ops." I added.

Her cries could be heard throughout the ship.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Warrant Officer Chelsea Baker, aboard UNSC Frigate <em>What Once Was, <em>10:45 hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"The marines did better than I expected." Chelsea said. "Two kills and they almost had the objective."

"They did better than anticipated." Will replied.

"Sir, you wanted to see us?" A new voice asked. Chelsea turned to find Kevin and his team.

"Correct petty officer. congratulations." Will replied.

"Sir? We lost." Kevin said, confused.

"Yes but you managed to take out all the Helljumpers and wound Castle four. That's cause for celebration."

"Thank you, sir." Kevin said.

"However it seems Lieutenant Ambrose didn't train you well enough. I always knew we were better." Will said, chuckling.

"Sir wha...your Beta's then. I should have known!" Kevin said.

"Correct again Petty Officer. You have a sharp eye." Chelsea said.

"Thank you, ma'am."

"We don't need your ammo after all. Your free to go." Will said. As one the team of five SPARTANS turned and left.

"Maybe we could work with them after all." Will said.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>That's all folks!<strong>

\*\* I hope you enjoyed and I hope you are as excited about theotherpianist's partnership. Once again thank you theotherpianist for beta'ing and allowing me to use your characters. Your awesome!\*\*

\*\*If you the reader have any OC's you would like to add please send me a PM or review. If not then the least you could do is just review anyway. Please, my heart aches for reviews!\*\*

\*\*Until next time have a wonderful time in whatever you are doing.\*\*

## 5. Chapter 5: Deja Vu

\*\*Hello everyone! How are all of you?\*\*

\*\*Okay so I know this is late but I only saw this last week. We finally have blue team in a game! We also got to see the events of The Cole Protocol. Probably my favourite book besides Ghosts of Onyx. Kick Thel's a\*\* Jai!\_\_  
><em>\*\*

\*\*Anyway thanks to everyone who reviewed last chapter. It was very much needed. Remember I can only get better if you review. Give constructive criticism or just say hi. No flames please or your review WILL be removed.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>From Codename: Overlord<em>

\_To Codename: Warrior\_

\_Date sent: 03/23/53\_

\_Well. It's over. All the destruction, the lives lost. I'll be honest with you Margret; I don't think we can ever fully recover. \_\_

\_And then there's the loss of MCPO-117, not to mention all the others, SPARTAN or not. I'd rather not think about all our lost boys and girls drifting out there.\_

\_We're planning to make a SPARTAN branch now meaning ONI won't have control over them. They'll be just like the Marines or Navy now. Let

the Helljumpers be number one again.\_

\_I hear your resigning soon, giving Captain Osman your position. She'll do just fine. You'll need to promote her though. There's so much to sort through, to fix so I have to end this.\_

\_Until we meet again Margret.\_

\_Fleet Admiral Lord Terrance Hood \_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lieutenant William Gunther, (Special Warfare team Castle) aboard Pelican <em>Fury, <em>en route to HVI 'swordsman'\_ , \_14:00, hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

\_ "Immediate, gird Foxtrot 36 is hot, recommend you abort, over."

-

"Roger recon, Your call sir." The co-pilot said, briefly turning towards William.

"We can't pass up this opportunity. We're going in." William replied. He turned towards the troop bay, staring at the two teams of SPARTANS getting ready. \_No, the Team. There's just one team now. \_He thought.

"Remember SPARTAN we only have one shot at this." The ONI lieutenant said from beside him.

She was a mystery to Will. She seemed like the typical spook though years of SPARTAN training and being able to analyze people told him otherwise. He'd keep his eye on her. He didn't trust her and it was evident she didn't trust him. Not that it mattered right now. There was a mission to complete.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Corporal Simon Andrews, (105th Marine Expeditionary Force) aboard Pelican <em>Hoplite<em>\*\*

\_ "We're going in." \_The SPARTAN said over the radio. We were currently speeding through several city blocks in the capital at high speeds and a part of me wondered why we were just now 'going loud' with our ops and who this HVI was. I banished the train of thought and quickly put a magazine into my SRS before making sure my scope was in working order. Around me the other members of my squad were doing their own pre-battle routines.

McKenzie gave Derose a soft punch in the arm while the squads grenadier, Private First Class Peterson readied a few grenades before turning towards the squads rifleman, Private Leroy Curtain. He was a small Helljumper and was the squads least experienced. He slowly motioned to the squads CQC specialist, Lance Corporal Jason Philips to clean his shotguns breach. Philips held his MA5D rifle loosely while he was checking the breach on his M90A. Last but not least was our sergeant.

Sergeant Jacob Clarke was a stocky man, he was one of the craziest

ODST's I knew and yet one of the most gentle, second only to McKenzie. She wouldn't even kill a fly. Well she would though unlike most Helljumpers she would kill it as quickly as possible instead of dragging it out. It ruins the fun in my opinion.

"You heard the man boys, time to earn some hazard pay!" He yelled, pulling back the bolt on his DMR.

"Yes sir! Let's give those Imp bastards hell!" Peterson yelled.

"30 Seconds out, stand by to...Whoa!" The pilot said. I turned and from my limited view of the upcoming urban terrain would have chosen a few other choice words, whoa not being one of them.

In front of us were three of the imperials walkers. AT-TE's I think they were called. I visibly paled though mentally I felt just fine. I had been in enough failed insertions to know the chance of me dying was small, not impossible but small.

The third Pelican which was carrying two squads of Rangers stormed ahead. When the three massive cannons on the tops of the walkers swivelled to fire at us they were hit first. The Pelican buckled from the shots and went down almost instantly. The second salvo saw the SPARTAN's Pelican get hit in the underbelly and I saw three of the SPARTANS thrown out. We were hit last. The shot gutted our left engine and we started to drift to the left. I grabbed hold of the side of the Pelican in an attempt to stay inside while the pilots battled for control.

"Left engines dead, bank to the left!" The pilot said to his co-pilot.

"I've got no traction, my systems dead! Fuck!" He replied.

"Mayday, mayday this is Pelican Echo Sierra Foxtrot we are going down at grid square Golf Charlie Whiskey, over!"

I quickly realized I might actually die and instantly turned towards Sergeant Clarke to gauge his reaction. To my surprise he had the biggest fucking grin I've ever seen.

"Lighten up Andrews! You look like your about to die!" He said. I somehow gave him the finger before turning towards McKenzie and Derose. I would make sure they lived, they had to live.

I saw we were about to land in a courtyard of sorts and braced myself for the impact.

When we hit I saw Philips was thrown into the side of the Pelican. I lost consciousness for I don't know how long, all I know was it felt good.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Julianne-G123, (SPARTAN Fireteam Rapier) four blocks from objective, Capital city of Naboo<strong>

"Petty Officer! Wake up! We have hostiles closing in on us!" I heard someone say. It sounded distant, far away. I heard the sounds of weapons fire and realized what happened. I jumped up, scanning for

targets as I did. I saw my rifle to my left and grabbed it.

I realized that Michael and the Warrant Officer had been thrown out as well. They were taking cover behind a low wall and were motioning for me to come. I ran over to them, sliding the last metre or so to avoid enemy fire that started to pick up after they saw me.

"Ma'am." I said, my voice neutral.

"Petty Officer." She replied. "Status?"

"Green, Ma'am." I said, popping out of cover to quickly fire a burst.

"Good. Rapier 3 engage hostiles on the upper balcony! Rapier 2 flank to the left, use the buildings."

"Acknowledged." I said, sprinting for the aforementioned buildings while bolts of plasma smacked the ground around me, as soon as I was in the relative safety of the buildings I quickly did a diagnostic of my armour, and finding no problems engaged my SPI armours photo-reactive panels, disappearing into the surroundings.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lieutenant Jessica Miller, (formerly SPARTAN B-301) aboard Pelican <em>Fury<em>

><strong>

"What \_happened\_?" I asked. The pilots had managed to regain control of the craft but the other two pelicans had been shot out of the sky.

"\_Hoplite\_ and \_Rumrunner\_ are down. \_Rumrunner\_ and her occupants are confirmed KIA. \_Hoplite \_though\_..." \_The pilot said, trailing off.

"Orders, Ma'am?" Lieutenant Gunther asked. "I lost three SPARTANS back there, Ma'am. Are we going to retrieve them?"

"Negative lieutenant. They're SPARTAN III's, they know what they signed up for." I said, emotionless.

"We can't just give up on them!" The other SPARTAN team leader yelled.

"Would you prefer they died for nothing, Gamma-Zero-Nine-Seven?" I said, addressing him by his number, rather than name.

"I won't leave my team to die, not again! Rapier 4 and 5 prep for insertion!" He yelled, turning toward his team.

"If you go, you'll be disobeying a direct order!" I yelled.

"And what order would that be, Ma'am? Face it, this plan's FUBAR!"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Corporal Simon Andrews, (105th Marine Expeditionary Force)<strong>

"This plan's FUBAR, fuck!" I heard someone yell. I stood up, nearly tripping as I did. I looked down to find the body of Private Curtain, his head twisted at a horrifying angle.

"Status!" Sergeant Clarke yelled. I saw he was missing his helmet and his face was covered in blood.

"Sir, Curtains down." I said.

"Peterson and Philips are dead. Damn." I heard McKenzie say.

"We lost our pilots too." Derose said.

"Grab their tags and ammo." Clarke said.

"Sarge, we better get moving." McKenzie said.

"Agreed. Head for those buildings. The mission stays the same."

I picked up my rifle and joined my team, quickly making sure the four 14.5x114mm Full Metal Jacket fin stabilizing armour piercing rounds were okay and in my rifle. There were hostiles around.

It was time to hunt.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Julianne-G123, (SPARTAN Fireteam Rapier) four blocks from objective, Capital city of Naboo<strong>

I slowly crept through the house, I think its a house anyway. I passed so many rooms. I also passed quite a few humans and aliens. I passed a family of four blue skinned aliens with tentacle like protrusions on their heads, they were cowering around a long table, most likely hiding from the gunfire. They hadn't seen me due to my active cameo. All it would take was one quick burst...

\_Trigger discipline! \_I reminded myself, passing the four aliens without a word said. (or shot fired).\_><em>

\_This is Hopilte 4 Actual...enant Miller...Down four blocks...Heading towards objective...status on...elican, over?" \_I heard over my radio.

\_Hopilte 4 Actual this is Rapier 2, say again over. I can barely hear you.\_ I said.

\_Rapier 2? Thank god. I thought we were alone out here. We're four blocks from the objective, now. I assume that's you making all that noise?" \_

\_Affirmative. Requesting assistance, over.\_

\_Copy that! McKenzie move your ass! The SPARTANS need help! We're coming SPARTAN.\_

\_Understood.\_

I made a sharp turn to the left as I had come to the other side of the courtyard. I could see the group of hostiles bunched up in a room. I primed a frag grenade and threw it. I waited until I heard the blast before rushing in.

I found every trooper dead or severely wounded and I quickly put them out of their misery with a few well placed bullets.

I went to the window the stormtroopers had been firing out of and waved to the Warrant Officer and Michael. I saw that the ODST's had also appeared, though to my dismay there was only four of them. Did we really lose so many? I thought.

As I made my way back to the group I saw that Michael was currently eyeing the female Helljumper. I gave him a quick punch in the side.

"What the hell?" He yelled over a private com channel, reeling from my punch.

"She's not your type." I said.

"Still, though..."

"Don't even think about it." I said.

"Listen up!" The Warrant Officer yelled. "I've made radio contact with the remaining pelican and I've learned that if we rush it we can meet them at the objective. The fleets also sending a second squad of Helljumpers to assist. Lets get moving!"

"You heard her! McKenzie move your ass, Derose stop staring at her ass, Andrews, watch the rooftops, five meter spread." The sergeant said.

There was a chorus of replies as the Helljumpers began to move.

As we walked I saw the Helljumpers were idly chatting away with Michael adding in a few things here and there. By comparison the Warrant Officer and myself were almost dead silent.

"Hey, anyone wonder why we haven't seen any hostiles yet?" The ODST by the name of Derose said.

"Yeah, you'd think we'd of seen a squad or a platoon by now." Michael responded. "This city's a ghost town."

"Buildings are just buildings, it's the people that make it a city." I said.

"Andrews, got any of your feelings?" The sergeant asked. The helljumper with the SRS99-S5 nodded.

"Three storey buildings on either side of us with us in a tight street. It's a snipers dream. Ambush heaven, if you ask me."

I nodded, coming to the same conclusion.

I was behind the female ODST, McKenzie. She was calmly holding her BR55-HB in a left handed grip, not many people did that. I

mused.

The Helljumper took about two more steps when the ground in front of her exploded. I realized it was a sniper and threw myself to the ground. The Helljumper, however merely spun on her heel, got into a crouch and fired a quick triple tap from her rifle.

"I think I got him." She said, breathing heavy.

"Is he down, Andrews?" The sergeant asked. The Helljumper, holding an SRS99-S5 shook his head.

"I can't tell, negative." He replied. As he said this the sergeants head exploded.

"Fuck, Man down!" Another Helljumper yelled.

"Where is he, I can't see him!"

"McKenzie, cover the third storey. Left!"

"Negative contact! He moved!"

"Get up, move! This is a kill zone!" The Warrant Officer yelled, as she hauled me onto my feet.

I ran with only the speed a SPARTAN was capable of, my rifle tucked into my chest. My blood was pumping and my adrenaline was causing me to go into what SPARTANS call 'spartan time'. I saw Michael and the Warrant Officer running with me but the helljumpers were lagging behind. I turned to cover them as the ground lit up with weapons fire. I fired a few bursts into the windows before running again.

"Where the hell are we going?" I heard one of the ODST's ask.

"The palace! Didn't you read the briefing?" Another replied.

"I never read the fucking briefings, fuck! The sarge is dead, the Rangers are dead and our squad is dead! It's just like-"

"No it's not, don't even go there, Derose. Don't you fucking go there."

"Why? I mean at least we had a SPARTAN II, right? But he left us halfway through, remember? The only way we got off that godforsaken thing was by trusting the bloody Hinge-Heads!"

"Don't get pissed at me, marine. In comparison this is a cakewalk." The sniper replied as we ducked into a building, narrowly avoiding an exploding grenade.

"I never said it wasn't, just that it was awfully similar to, well you know."

"Are you two done?" I asked before pointing at the palace. "Look there it is, right there in front of our faces."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lieutenant William Gunther, (Special Warfare Team Castle)<br/><strong>\*\*At Naboo royal palace, Theed\*\*

"Clear the area, G-097 take your team and sweep left, I've got the right." Will said. The SPARTAN saluted before following his orders.

"Ma'am no sign of hostiles." William said, briefly turning to look into the back of the now landed pelican.

"Good. I've radioed your team SPARTAN, no casualties but the Helljumpers are down to four. They're making their way over here but I've called in an extra squad to help, leader goes by the name of Staff Sergeant Hailey. They'll be here in a minute, maybe two."

"Understood, Ma'am."

Will heard the sounds of weapons fire from the left and turned to face the sound, though he saw one of Rapier, the sniper, fire at whatever it was.

"Status?" Will yelled.

"Hostile down. Only one, though. Orders?" The sniper replied.

"Hold position. Something's not right."

He would have continued if he hadn't seen the Pelican dropship descend through the clouds. When it landed fifteen fully armed and armoured ODST's came streaming out.

"Staff Sergeant Hailey?" Will asked to the lead trooper, armed with an MA5K carbine with an M90A on her back.

"I'm your girl, sir." She said. "Hades squad is green and very, very mean!"

"Glad to hear it, Staff. Get your men spread out, I want a perimeter established ASAP!"

"Sir." She replied, saluting. Will watched her go before turning back towards the sniper.

"Keep your eyes peeled." William said.

The SPARTAN gave a thumbs up or 'can do' in response.

"Sierra G-097 on me! Staff sergeant!" Will yelled, beckoning them over.

"Sir." Kevin said.

"What do you need, SPARTAN?" Staff sergeant Hailey asked.

"Staff what did you see on the way down? Hostiles, if any."

"No sir. I don't know why though. If this were a UNSC world you'd have Helljumpers on the ground in less than ten minutes after positive contact, but this place is a ghost town."

"Agreed. All teams watch yourselves. Something is very wrong here."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Private Yale Strauss, (19th Imperial Shock Division) Naboo royal palace<strong>

"Eyes up first platoon, hostiles to your right. Hold fire and wait for the signal."

"I see at least twenty in total." I said, quickly checking over my E-11 blaster rifle. We were inside the royal palace. Why I had no idea however activity had picked up in the lower levels a week ago. I assumed that something had been unearthed and the 'UNSC' had found out about it.

"That all? It'll be like fish in a barrel." Another trooper said. ""I heard they use slugthrowers. I bet we won't get a single casualty."

"You never know..." I said, my hands tightly gripping my blaster.

"Got five more, coming in from the south! Looks like second platoon really hammered them."

"I think we should split. Draw them out then attack." I said.

"Negative MO-3998, we wait here." The lieutenant said.

"Yes sir." I said, aiming at the three green colored soldiers.

"Get ready to fire, steady...steady...now!"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Sophie G-317 (SPARTAN Fireteam Rapier) Naboo royal palace <strong>

"You heard the lieutenant. Stay sharp." Kevin said.

I slowly scanned the area, my rifle sweeping over everything in sight. I was about to say we were clear when Emily blinked three red acknowledgment lights.

\_Fall Back!\_

I turned to run when the ground around me exploded. I was thrown off my feet and my shields were drained completely.

"Fall back! Move. It's a trap!"

"Rapier 4 respond!"

"I'm green. My shields gone." I said getting to my feet. I saw my rifle beside me and quickly grabbed it, rushing towards my team. I saw that Michael and Julianne had joined us, firing bursts at

whatever moved. I also saw the bodies of four ODST's. The unfortunate victims of the ambush.

"lieutenant Miller to all teams! We need to get inside the palace, into the main hall! Push forwards."

"The best offence...I guess." Juilanne said while she reloaded.

"Is she insane!" Michael yelled, quickly grabbing an enemy grenade and throwing it back, obliterating two enemy troopers.

"She's ONI. Its practically a given!" Kevin yelled back. "Move it up Rapier!" So we did. Five SPARTANS against a palace full of hostiles. I saw the rest of our forces stay where they were. Even the other two SPARTANS.

"Guess its just us, then?" I said.

"No, look! The Spook is coming with us." Julianne said. To my amazement I saw her running towards us, M7S in hand and firing at the mass of hostiles.

We made it to the door of the palace when the ONI agent caught up with us.

"You have more guts than I thought, SPARTANS. Move up!" She said, moving into the palace, firing as she went.

"Yes ma'am."

The pitiful amount of troopers inside the palace was laughable, it was really quite sad. There was only a squads worth guarding the main entrance. We easily blew through them and made our way deeper into the palace. The Spook led us into a side room where I saw a stairwell. Unlike the rest of the palace this stairwell was made of metal, hard black metal it looked alien and out of place. A heavy blast door was at the bottom of the stairs.

"Down the stairs SPARTANS." The ONI agent said.

"Where are we going?" I thought. As the rear guard I was constantly checking our backs. So far nothing had shot at us though I knew that would change.

"Anyone have explosives?" The lieutenant asked. Michael raised his hand before moving towards the heavy blast door. After he had placed a block of C12 and told everyone to stand back he blew the door. It wasn't a very big explosion due to the blast door however it still made the ground shake.

"Ma'am I suggest we clear the area before you come in." Kevin said. The lieutenant nodded.

We moved in, engaging our Active Cameo.

The room was large, and underground. An elevator was off to the left along with many smaller rooms. We moved towards the rooms, and after clearing them of Imperial presence allowed the spook inside. She went straight for the elevator and pressed the button. We quickly made our way inside before it began it's descent.

The room was covered in tables and gadgets that reminded me of a science lab. However there were only two things we needed. I knew what both of them were and had very differing opinions on them. One had the look of being cryogenically frozen.

The first was a crystal. a forerunner slipspace crystal. One just like it had caused the deaths of ten fellow SPARTAN IIIs. It had to be destroyed.

The second, however...

I stared at the frozen black armour almost like I was in a trance. The silver visor stared back at me. This is what Lieutenant Ambrose was. What he wanted us to become. The hopes of humanity and the demons of the Covenant.

A SPARTAN II.

\* \* \*

><p><em>From Codename: Hunter<em>

\_To Codename: Sparky\_

\_Date sent: 07/24/34\_

\_The operation was a success. You choose them well, agent. Sierra-109 completed all her objectives but one. That crystal was vital to the war effort. Though she did destroy an entire Covenant ship building factory and neighbouring battlegroup almost single handedly so we can forgive her somewhat. No more ships will be built on LN-1232 anymore, thankfully.\_

\_However need I remind you that SPARTANS are finite. No more of these suicide missions. Not for the II's anyway. I hear Ackerson has something planned. I hope to god it works.\_

\* \* \*

><p><em><strong>And that's all folks!<strong>\_

\_\*\*Thanks to theotherpianist for beta'ing and allowing me to use his characters. Go check out his story if you haven't already.\*\*\_

\_\*\*I have a question for everyone. What place are the ODST's referencing during their sprint? Your prize is learning where the next place in the story is. \*\*\_

\_\*\*I'm going to say this now. The frozen SPARTAN II is an OC I created. She is the the last major OC introduced before the story gets going. \*\*\_

\_\*\*That said I will be accepting OC's from you, the fans. Leave them in a review if you are a guest (please give yourself a name) or PM them to me if you have an account. Here is the format I'd like it to be in:\*\*\_

\_\*\*Allegiance: (Empire, UNSC or neither)\*\*\_

\_\*\*Gender: \*\*\_  
\_\*\*Name and rank(if applicable):\*\*\_  
\_\*\*Physical description: (Height, eye colour, hair colour, skin tone)\*\*\_  
\_\*\*Personality: \*\*\_  
\_\*\*Armour(if applicable):\*\*\_  
\_\*\*Other: (Is there anything else I could use, for example \_is easily angered)\*\*\_  
\_\*\*Sooo yeah. That's about it. Submit an OC if you have one and if you don't then please review! I need MOAR! ;)\*\*\_

## 6. Chapter 6: The past reborn

\*\*Hello everyone! Its me.\*\*

\*\*I think I'll clear up some misconception that I've seen where people have guessed who the SPARTAN II is. She is an OC of mine, She doesn't 'exist' in canon (though I say she does) Her armour is the armour featured on the cover of The Cole Protocol, for those of you wondering.\*\*

\*\*Enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"Man has always reached for the next star or the next valley. We always want to know what's on the other side. We're explorers by nature, by design. I want to know what's out there. we all do to some extent. Why stop now when we're at our strongest."<em>

\_Commander Tomas Lasky, on UNSC Infinity's reassignment. \_

\* \* \*

><p><em>SYSTEM REBOOT/\_

\_DIAGNOSTIC...running\_

\_ARMOUR INTEGRITY...97%\_

\_USER INTEGRITY...67% \_

\_DATE...August 23 2534 /ERROR/ /UNIDENTIFIED INTRUSION/ \_

\_WARNING IFF SYSTEM OFFLINE/\_

\_OUTSIDE DISTURBANCE DETECTED/\_

\_WAKING USER...\_

My eyes snapped open.

\_ How am I alive? Where am I? \_I thought.

The architecture looked somewhat familiar. I looked at my motion tracker. Six contacts, unknown affiliation. Two coming towards me, two in the back and two standing in the middle of the room. I only saw one, however. Human, female. Wearing black body armour. But no IFF tag was visible. Rebel, perhaps?

\_But where are the other five contacts? \_Then I saw it. A shimmer to my left. Then another to my right. Only one thing had active cameo and it was not humans. My blood froze. The Covenant had captured me. I saw the left contact come near me. I waited until we were almost touching before I sprang into motion, lunging at the shimmer and kicking it in the stomach. The shimmer was thrown back by my kick and it slammed into a wall. I saw another rushing me from behind attempting to grab me. I dodged the strike and elbowed the shimmer in the head, throwing it off balance.

"Stand down SPARTAN! That's an order!" I heard. I realized the voice had come from the woman. She reached into her armour and pulled out a badge.

As soon as I saw the badge I instantly snapped to attention.

"Ma'am!"

"Atleast someone listens to orders." The woman muttered, looking in the direction of the first shimmer. The shimmer decloaked however instead of the Elite Spec Ops I had expected there was a figure in dark green armour with a helmet similar to EVA with a gold visor. The figure held an MA5K rifle loosely. I saw four more figures decloak with similar armour and weapons.

"Permission to speak freely, Ma'am?" I asked. The woman nodded. "What are they?"

"We're SPARTANS." One of the shimmers said. I was puzzled by this. They didn't have the MJOLNIR armour of my fellow SPARTAN II's and none of them would have attacked me. I would have said this had my com not burst to life.

\_This is Sierra 317 to Lieutenant Miller! We've been pushed into the palace. Did you get what we came for? \_ There were UNSC forces in danger? I looked to the Lieutenant.

\_We did. We're coming out now. Have the pelicans get ready.\_

\_Yes Ma'am. \_

"Can you fight, SPARTAN?" The Lieutenant asked. I turned towards her.

"I need a weapon."

\* \* \*

><p><em>"People will categorize the war's<em> worst\_ days but The worst day of the war was when it started"\_\_

Admiral Jonathan Graves, on the subject of the human-covenant war

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Corporal Simon Andrews, (105 Marine Expeditionary Force)  
14:30 hrs, July 9 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time  
\*\*

"They don't let up!" I yelled, firing point blank into an overeager trooper before ducking behind cover to avoid the fire of two more. We had linked up with a Ranger, he was the only one left. He turned the corner, firing at the mass of troopers facing us.

"Hold the line! don't let them through!" Staff Sergeant Hailey yelled, sidestepping an attacking trooper before shooting him in the back. After a few more minutes of pitched battle I heard her yell. "We can't hold them, Andrews keep your team here. Adams, Taggart and Mitchell covering fire. Go Lieutenant. Get out of here. We'll cover you."

The SPARTAN turned towards her, making a move towards her position when a flurry of enemy fire halted him in his tracks.

"I know what your thinking. You two are more important than a bunch of marines and a ranger." The Staff Sergeant said.

"The Lieutenant said she's ready. We need to hold out just a bit longer. Don't give up on yourself yet Staff."

"Yes sir." She replied, then with renewed vigor she yelled: "Alright Hades squad listen up! These bastards think they can roll right over us! I say we let them."

"Sarge?" The ranger asked, clearly confused.

"Let them come, engage them in CQC. Nobody fights like us." The second SPARTAN said. cocking a shotgun.

The ranger nodded, pulling out a knife and an SMG. "Yes Ma'am! Lets give it to them."

"That won't be necessary, Specialist." A new voice said. I turned to see the ONI spook and the five other SPARTANS as well as-.

"Holy Crap! Is that what I think it is? Who I think it is?" The ranger said.

It was a massive figure, easily seven feet tall. It dwarfed even the two SPARTANS with us. I knew what it was, everyone did.

"Sir, Chief Petty Officer Seirra-109 reporting. Where do you need me?" The figure, no SPARTAN said. I was surprised to hear a heavily accented woman's come from the helmet.

The SPARTAN Lieutenant stared for a moment. "Does your gear have shields?"

"Sir?"

"Never mind. Post to the left, near the Ranger." The SPARTAN nodded, moving to her place.

\_ "This is Pelican Fury to all ground forces. We're coming in." \_

\_ "Copy that, Fury. Waiting on you." \_lieutenant Miller said.

\_ "That's what my wife said too. ETA ten seconds." \_

"You heard the flyboy! Helljumpers prepare to egress." Staff sergeant Hailey said.

I took the time to see that the new SPARTAN was hammering the hostiles, she wasn't even firing her weapon. she was BEATING them to death.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN-109, 19:30 hrs, August 23 2534 ERROR, Date unknown/\*\*

Everything was weird, different. The area I had been 'sleeping' in was different from where I last was. images had flashed through my mind then, of the factory, the secret installation, the prowler getting sucked into oblivion. \_the screams.\_

I had banished those thoughts as soon as they came, focusing on the task at hand. Helping those UNSC personnel. When I had come out of the labyrinth of hallways I had seen the sight of a pitched battle between UNSC forces and a group of white armoured humanoids. I saw the familiar armour of a UNSC Army Ranger as well as the signature body armour of the ODST's. I also saw two other figures wearing what looked like a version of my armour, however I didn't know who was wearing it. \_More 'SPARTANS' perhaps? \_I thought.

I saw two white armoured hostiles rushing me and upon realizing they weren't going to stop to shoot I adjusted my body. The first one ran right into me, and upon realizing he didn't do any damage tried to shoot me. I saw this even as the second one slammed into me. I threw the second one into the first's line of fire and to my satisfaction watched it get shot. I then shoved the first with enough force to send him flying into a pillar.

I then turned back towards the courtyard and the mess of enemy combatants attacking us. I briefly wondered where the Covenant were. Surely they were still a threat?

"I see the Pelican!" One of the ODST's yelled. I looked up to see the familiar shapes of Pelican dropships descending towards us. I heard the sounds of enemy soldiers charging us, trying to kill us before the ships came.

Three of them came at me, from all sides available. I grabbed the first one by the neck and hoisted him up in the air before breaking his windpipe and throwing him to the ground. I then pulled out the M6C/SOCOM given to me by one of the SPARTANS and shot the other two with well placed head shots.

"Chief!" I turned towards the voice and noticing the Pelican waiting for me quickly ran towards it. Two enemy soldiers were blocking my

way so I promptly shot the first before dogging a burst from the other ones rifle. I shot him as I was getting in the Pelican.

"You have a lot to catch up on, SPARTAN." The ONI officer said. I merely nodded.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Sophie-G317, aboard UNSC Frigate <em>What Once Was, <em>16:45 hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"Why did we take that fucking crystal!" Emily yelled. "Did the last Op teach them nothing!"

"Calm down Em. The only way the crystal could harm us is if we trigger a slipspace drive." I said. I briefly thought about how our most soft spoken team member was the only one who actually swore.

"Calm down! Are we just supposed to end up like Cutlass now? Are we?"

"No-no I didn't mean it like that...just, don't destroy it unless we absolutely have to. Okay?"

"Yeah...I'm sorry. It's just that this feels wrong. I shouldn't be taking it out on you guys."

"What?" Julianne asked quizzically as her eyes shot up from a datapad.

I chuckled. "Nothing. So find out anything on our resident SPARTAN II?" I asked.

"Not much. Most of its just mission reports. However I did find the report from when she was taken." The way Julianne said it made it sound like the most innocent thing in the universe. I knew, however that it was a VERY big deal.

"Here take a look." She said, handing me the datapad.

\*\*CANDIDATE-109\*\*

\*\*NAME: Elise /REDACTED/\*\*

\*\*DATE OF BIRTH: October 4 2511\*\*

\*\*COLONY OF RESIDENCE: Helix IV\*\*

\*\*NOTES: Candidate 109 evaded capture for a mere five minutes before ONI apprehended her. The team was at first confused. They thought she would prove more of a challenge. They sedated her and put her in the car however when the agents attempted to remove her clothes to place on the clone she woke up. Two agents received injuries consisting of a bloody nose and a black eye respectively. However further issues were minimal.\*\*

"Wow. She beat ONI?" Emily asked.

"Seems she at least bruised them, yeah." I said. I then noticed an attached picture. It showed a young girl with short blond hair and hazel eyes, she was wearing a pink t-shirt with the words love and peace on the front and pink track pants. She was evidently crying in the picture.

"When was that taken?" Julianne asked to no one in particular.

"It was taken right after I had been grabbed." A new voice said. It took me a moment to realize who it was before I yelled. "Officer on deck!"

"Didn't your parents tell you it's wrong to look at other peoples things?" Elise said.

"It was my fault Ma'am. I'll take the punishment." Julianne said in a heartbeat.

"You'll all have punishment that I will give out at a later date. Carry on." She said, turning and walking out. I merely stared at the space she had been in.

"Why are we always the ones who get in trouble?" Emily muttered.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, aboard UNSC Frigate <em>What Once Was<em>, 11:23 hrs, July 10 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

I motioned my team forwards, the photo reactive panels on our armour concealing us in the low light of the cargo bay.

We had been 'volunteered' for a wargames match against a Marine company and a group of Army regulars. Why I had no idea however I assumed it was because of the 'incident' yesterday involving my team and the SPARTAN II.

"Eyes on two contacts, on top of the cargo container to your right." Emily said.

"Do you have a shot number 5?" I asked, crouching in the shadows.

"Do I have a...yes I do. Do you even need to ask?"

"Then take it." I heard the two near silent 'puffs' from her MA5K2 and a moment later we moved again.

"Nice shot Rapier 5. Rapier 2, Rapier 4 Sitrep."

"Multiple hostiles up front. They're searching for us."

"Copy that. Hold position we're coming to you." We had to take out two more patrols before we finally regrouped.

"The base is heavily guarded. Multiple patrols and checkpoints." Rapier 2 said. "And I swear I saw an Elite, sir." We had been told there would be some surprises though an elite wasn't something I was

expecting.

"Elites? Here? Please, your probably just seeing things." Rapier 3 said, briefly turning to look at us.

"Just to be sure send out the drone." I said. I heard Rapier 3 give a moan of disapproval as Rapier 2 reached into one of her armours back compartments and pulled out a small, fly like drone. She then threw it in the direction of the 'base'.

"Getting a visual feed. Transferring it to your HUD...take a look, boss."

I saw a small screen appear in the corner of my Heads Up Display and, after enlarging it watched Rapier 2 guide her drone through the base. At first I saw only the marines however I was beginning to see the army units at the most heavily defended positions. It didn't take a genius to know why.

It was common knowledge that the army was the best at defending anything. I'm pretty sure it's because they carry so much gear with them they pretty much don't need resupply, ever.

The most intriguing thing, however and in some cases the scariest was in the command room. The army and marine commander was there as well as to my surprise and confusion an Elite Ultra.

I knew my team would have varying reactions to the elite and braced myself for the onslaught.

"What the..."

"Where the hell..."

"Damn Covie thinks he can just..."

"ROE Rapier 1?"

"Hold position and go quiet. We've got ourselves a snag." I said.  
"Can you get audio?"

"Yes sir. Here you go."

"-Think we should redeploy our forces to the far corridors." The Army commander said.

"If we do that our flanks will be open." The Marine commander shot back.

"Allow my warriors to guard your flanks. Keep your main force focused on the front and the rear." The Elite said.

"Getting battle tactics from a hinge-head? Now I've seen everything." The Army commander scoffed.

"We've already lost three patrols. I say we let the hinge-heads try their luck. Besides if we lose we can just pin it on them." The marine commander rebuffed.

"Fine. Alright Field Master, send your teams in."

I turned back to look at my team. They had all seen the information shown so I had no need to brief them. "Rapier 2 keep that drone tuned in, update me if anything else comes up. Rapier go dark, RV at the far side of the base. Use Advance Pattern Bravo, go."

"What about the elites?" Emily asked.

"Those are to be avoided at all costs unless otherwise stated, clear?" I ordered.

"Sir."

"Move out."

We trekked around the sides of the enemy lines catching a trio of army troopers off guard. They were quickly dispatched.

"Hold! Contact, disregard my last, Elite patrol, incoming!" Rapier 2 whispered. I almost got us discovered as I was about to radio all UNSC channels about the elites before I stopped myself. Old habits die hard.

"Fan out, surround them." I quickly ordered. Our Photo reactive panels would keep us hidden, I hoped.

There were three elites, all minors, they walked past Rapier 2,3 and myself however one stopped inches from Rapier 5, checking the area.

"Permission to engage, Rapier lead?" Rapier 5 asked, bringing her rifle up to its head. I tensed.

"Negative. Wait." I said. Number 4 do you have a shot?"

"Yes sir, just tell me when."

"Engage." I said, firing my rifle at the nearest elite. As we were using TTR rounds it took a little more ammo than normal to bring them down however two had hit the floor within about five seconds after I first fired. The third, however did something brash. It lunged to the side, tackling Sophie and sending Michael diving away. I held my fire, the danger of hitting Sophie to great to risk it.

"Take him, guys!" She yelled out, struggling in its grip.

"Rapier spread out, disengage Camo. No need for it now." I said. One by one my team revealed themselves, their weapons trained on the elite.

"The mighty Demons. So full of yourselves, so sure of your success. It is pitiful how easy it is to fool you!" The elite snarled. I noticed it was speaking English, perfect English. I saw in my peripheral vision two dozen elites uncloak around us, their weapons charged and ready. "Surrender your arms and forfeit, you've lost!"

I saw marines and army troopers form up around us, their weapons trained on us as well. I didn't falter.

"Stand firm, SPARTANS. We've never lost to elites and we won't lose

now."

"What can you do demon? you are surrounded, we hold one of your own. Give up!" The elite yelled.

"SPARTANS don't surrender, we never will fucker." Rapier 5 yelled.

"Then you will die!" It raised its weapon to Sophie's head but a burst from an M7 stopped it from firing. "What?"

I saw another figure land right in front of us, its black armour almost invisible in the low light of the cargo bay. It held an M7 in each of its hands with a BR55 battle rifle on its back. The marines and army troopers looked hesitantly at the figure, their aim faltering for a few moments.

"Get out of here, Rapier, leave them to me." The figure said. I recognized the voice as the SPARTAN II.

"Yes Ma'am. Rapier...lets move." I said.

"What about Sophie?" Michael asked.

"Let me worry about her, you have an objective to reach, get going." The SPARTAN II said.

"Yes, Ma'am." I said. Heading towards the enemy base. Rapier 2, 3 and 5 were right behind me.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer SPARTAN-109<strong>

"So...who's first?" I asked, raising my twin Sub-machineguns. It struck me then that I didn't have enough ammunition, there were two dozen Elites as well as a platoon's worth of Marine and Army units. The UNSC forces could be dispatched with a single round to all of them however the elites would take twice as much ammo. I had 720 rounds of ammo collectively for the M7's and 180 rounds for the battle rifle.

"Humans leave the demon to us. Go find the rest." The main elite said. The UNSC personnel looked unsure however a lieutenant yelled to get them moving, they almost ran out of my line of fire. I mentally thanked them. That left 20 elites, one SPARTAN III hostage and me. Easy.

"Long time no see, split lips." I said, sweeping my SMG's over all the elite, my fingers dangerously close to the triggers. One of them growled, so I shot it in the jaw. its shields kept it in the fight but before the rest could attack me I was off running towards the main elite. Before it could move I swept its legs out from under it, freeing the SPARTAN and sending the elite tumbling to the floor. The SPARTAN gave thanks before heading for her team. I was alone.

It felt VERY good. I fired at the elites now, taking out two with controlled burst to the head before turning my guns onto the rest, spraying them with bullets. The M7 in my left hand ran dry so I quickly reloaded, keeping the elites down with bursts from the one in

my right hand. I saw one elite attempt to throw some kind of grenade. I tried to shoot it but the elite was faster, tossing it before I had a chance. I rolled to the side, firing as I did so before sliding behind a low wall.

I briefly checked my MJOLINIR MK IV armour as the aforementioned grenade exploded in the background, my eyes lingered on the newly installed shield system. I hadn't been hit yet and intended to keep it that way however I was curious. I wanted to know how much damage it could take. I had asked about it earlier but had gotten no reply. I popped out of cover, firing my SMG's in a wide arc. None of the elites had rushed me, for which I was grateful but I knew they would try it, sooner or later. As if taunting me three elites rushed the barrier, weapons up and firing, the center elite carried an energy sword. I was confused about this. I had heard that the elites were using rifles and grenades made specifically for training but no one said anything about swords.

I fired at the middle one, sending the elite forwards in an attempt to dodge my shots. I realized in my flurry to kill the center one both M7's ran out of ammo. I couldn't reload so I did the next best thing, I threw both of them, impacting the left and right elites specifically. I kicked the sword wielding elite when it attempted to slash me, diverting its strike before grabbing it in a choke hold and holding as a shield. Just as I suspected the other elites fired at us, comrade or not and shot their friend. I pushed it away from me before pulling out my Battle Rifle, dropping the rest of the elites with precise bursts. I looked over the two dozen 'dead' elites with a small amount of pride.

I've still got it! I thought, softly kicking a nearby body. The elite growled and I resisted the urge to shoot it again. This was a training mission, my bullets wouldn't have any effect on its health or general state of well-being. The sounds of gunfire sounded off the very far right. I left the elite and picked up my discarded SMGs and after attaching them to the magnetic holsters on my thighs headed for the other SPARTANS.

I kept my rifle up and sweeping the area. There was a lot of places someone could hide. All it would take was one missed shadow and I would be effectively 'dead'.

I briefly mused on how long it had taken me to take out the elites and wished with all my being that Matt was here. I knew if he had been covering me I wouldn't have had to prolong the fight and could have easily taken out the main threats while he dealt with the ones farther off. He wouldn't miss, he never missed. I would need to ask about him. Was he even still alive? Was he stuck on some asteroid in the middle of nowhere fighting the Covenant's endless horde?

I passed a group of frozen army soldiers. I was getting close though something was...off. I darted into the shadow of a nearby cargo container. The gunfire had stopped completely. This either meant that the other SPARTANS had been eliminated or had eliminated their aggressors. Personally I was betting the former, and as I slowly rounded a corner saw the vast majority of the team frozen. The only one who wasn't was the one I had saved. She was, I assumed catching her breath. I tensed as I realized she could be compromised. After I left the shadows of the cargo container there was a sizeable space of open ground I needed to cover to reach the other SPARTAN. I looked

over the surrounding area, analyzing everything I could see.

\_300 meter distance between me and the friendly. Open space with no cover. Buildings on the right and left with overlapping fields of fire. Multiple small trash heaps near the friendly, assume traps and avoid. Glinting in the far left second floor building. Sniper. Threat level: high. Multiple hostiles with small arms in good vantage points with cover. Threat level: Moderate. \_

The best course of action that I could see was letting the other SPARTAN draw the enemies fire while I snuck in and completed the objective. She was irrelevant to the mission and would be just another casualty. Expendable.

I grabbed a nearby container and threw it in the direction of the SPARTAN. It hit the floor with an audible bang and caused the hostiles to notice the SPARTAN. As I expected they instantly opened fire, peppering the area with bullets. I ran towards the left building, the enemy HQ as the sound of bullets hitting their mark rang in my head.

As the hostiles were distracted I had no need for stealth and merely kicked the door in, hitting a marine in the process and knocking her out. Another one appeared, most likely to help his comrades but a burst of 9.5mm bullets to his chest stopped him in his tracks.

I checked the digital ammo counter on my battle rifle and found I had nine rounds left, the companion counter in my HUD said the same. I switched to single shot, and wanting to conserve ammunition didn't reload. Once again I wished Matt was here. He could have easily warned me of the hostiles before I had even opened the door. Nevertheless I cleared the building and 'killed' the enemy CO's thus ending the mission.

As everyone was dusting themselves off the team of SPARTANS approached me.

"Why did you give me away?" The one I had condemned asked. I noticed there was barely contained anger in her voice. "I was going to sneak in there. I could have gotten the objective."

"Negative. There were snipers in the windows as well as a large group of hostiles with superior weapons and placement. You would have only caused more harm than good." I replied flatly.

"How?"

"You would have compromised my stealth and your well being was irrelevant to the mission."

"Why did you save me earlier, then?" She asked. Why did I save her? I could have easily avoided the elites altogether and continued on.

\_Your going soft! \_A voice in my head stated. I ignored it.

"The opportunity presented itself and I acted. Now Petty officer." I stated, enunciating Petty Officer. "You will not chastise me for my actions when, given the situation they were completely correct. You are dismissed."

She turned and left, heading to her room. I, however was going to ask about a friend.

\* \* \*

><p>"Ma'am? If I could have a moment?" I asked, looking at the ONI spook intently. I had looked all over the ship for her after the training mission however I found out that she was on one of the prowlers. I had waited for an hour for her to come back, I was noticed she was in her quarters and headed there ASAP. She nodded.<p>

"I would like to know the current whereabouts of Sierra-027, Ma'am."

"027? Hang on let me see..." She said, typing on a computer. "Ah here we are. Matt-027. I see why you wanted to know about him. He's your spotter?" I nodded.

"I'm afraid he was killed in action during the battle of Reach. He was killed when his Pelican was shot down. He died on impact. I'm sorry."

I took a shaky step backwards. Matt was dead. The only person I could truly trust was dead. Killed on impact. He hadn't even been able to engage the enemy. He died without firing a shot. My fists clenched.

"Thank you, Ma'am." I said. I saluted and walked out, my face devoid of emotions but my mind was reeling. His death had been a waste. I wasn't even there to help him, to save him. I had been frozen in that wretched chamber for...how long? More than 20 years. 23 years. I punched the wall, denting it severely. I needed to sleep, to think about all this.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So how was that? Feedback would be nice, especially on how I wrote Elise.<strong>

\*\*A very big thanks to my beta theotherpianist for his help in making this chapter be as good as it can be!\*\*

\*\*I realized around halfway through writing this chapter that I haven't written a dedicated Star Wars POV for some time now and I haven't included the OC's some people have given me. For that I am very sorry and to make it up to you the next chapter will be entirely Star Wars POV wise.\*\*

\*\*Please don't forget to review! It means a lot to me! :)\*\*

## 7. Chapter 7: The Black Knight

\*\*UPDATE: I dun-goofed. I mixed up the dates. No one knew or called me on it. Shame on you if you knew and didn't say anything.  
:(\*\*

\*\*Its that time again! Please enjoy this latest

chapter!\*\*

\*\*Remember to review. Please and thank you.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"Rules of Engagement are just cynical games for politicians to play. It's a war, people get killed. There's no way you can make that look reasonable."<em>

Staffan Sentzke, wanted Insurrectionist. Presumed dead in March 2553\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Former Jedi Padawan S<strong>\*\*ilva Aventios, Naboo royal palace, Theed\*\*

"Can you believe those...those, those barbarians!" One of my 'guards' yelled. I turned towards him, Sable was his name. I shot him a steep glare, quieting him. It had been a day since the 'UNSC' had attacked and the entire planet was on edge. The Queen had called a meeting with imperial officers. The consensus was for the UNSC ships to be attacked and routed from the system.

I didn't blame her.

The UNSC had essentially broken their agreement with the queen in that no civilian would be harmed in combat. It was in truth a hopelessly naïve agreement made by a child. I still didn't even know why the Naboo elected their rulers so young. It baffled me.

"I say we kick these UNSC out of the system! They've brought nothing but death to our people!" One of the Naboo ministers yelled. There was a tidal wave of cheers from the other people gathered.

"We will not attack...the Empire will do this for us." The Queen said, quieting the ministers.

"You can't be serious!" I yelled. "Would the great Queen of Naboo really stoop that low?"

"Know your place, child!" One of the guards yelled.

"Padawan Aventios. I understand your anger but this is the only way. We can't keep letting these primitive murderers run loose on our planet." The Queen replied.

"So we sell them out to the Empire instead?"

"It has already been done. By tomorrow the UNSC will be dead and gone. They will never plague this system or its people again." The Naboo minister of defence said.

"Murderers. All of you!" I said, glaring at the assembled crowd.

"Don't worry about them, commander. They're just a bunch of rich snobs." Another one of my guards whispered. I nodded.

"We aren't needed here. Let's go." I said, my two guards following my every step.

As we walked through the tightly packed streets of Theed I stole a glance at the wreckage of one of the UNSC ships. The bright green paint job made the craft visible from miles away. Alien lettering dotted its surface. There were Imperial stormtroopers securing the crash site. The ship and the people who had recently commanded it puzzled me to no end.

Did they always go back on their agreements?

Did they always put civilians in danger?

I had so many questions. If only I could ask them.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Private Yale Strauss, Imperial Barracks A-17, Naboo<strong>

\_Why is army life so kriffing boring! \_I thought, meagerly chewing on a ration bar. My Platoon had been sent to this Barracks after the battle. We had suffered no casualties but had been in poor spirits due to the losses our company as a whole had taken. First and Second Platoon had had almost 60% casualties.

I swept my eyes around the Barracks. There were five troopers playing a game of Sabbac in the far left corner, a group of troopers watching the holo-news in the far right, a multitude of troopers sleeping or reading and a small group just talking. I slowly got up from my bed, careful not to disturb the quiet mood of the barracks as I left. A walk would do me good, yes. That's what I needed.

As I walked through the crowded city streets I couldn't help but wonder what these civvies were thinking. only a day ago this place had been a warzone, literally!

Most of the civilians parted as I walked, allowing me through the thicker crowds. A squad of fellow stormtroopers gave me silent nods as I passed, I returned them. The city, while filled to the brim with life was in a state of fear and imperial assets were being diverted to stop scared civvies from doing anything rash.

\_Speaking of rash. \_I thought, watching a group of crazed civvies rush the squad with sticks and knives. The troopers merely formed a firing line and shot them with stun blasts. I moved on.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Prowler <em>Scythe, <em>13:45 hrs, July 10 2557 /UNSC Military Calendar/ Military Standard Time\*\*

Captain Fredric Willion was pacing the bridge of his Prowler. Around him a flurry of officers and crewmen ran to and fro, making sure the ship couldn't be seen by the incoming Imperial patrol.

\_How the hell do they know were we are? \_He wondered. If this patrol had been out of the blue and in his eyes random like the others then he wouldn't have batted an eye, things happen. However this patrol

had been following the Prowler and by extension the battlegroup for little over an hour.

Yes, the three Imperial ships had been tracking ships with state of the art stealth drives for an hour.

The commander of the battlegroup had ordered the Captains tiny little Prowler to stall the enemy ships while the rest of the battlegroup headed for unoccupied space. He could not accomplish those orders.

His ship was not meant for frontline, heavy hitting combat, nor was it made to be a rearguard. No his ship was meant for sabotage, subterfuge, inserting a small three man SPARTAN team into one of the aforementioned Imperial ships...

Now those last three, those he could accomplish.

"NAV how far until we are within their weapons range?" The captain asked.

"Uh...another few kilometers, sir. Ten." The man replied.

"Weapons status on the stealth mines? Have they been found?"

"No sir, not as of yet. Though the first ship is within range. Should we blow them?"

"Negative. Wait for the opportune moment."

"Sir energy spikes detected along target Alpha's bow! They know where we are!" One crewman yelled. The bridge activity increased.

"Sir all enemy ships in range, EMP mines ready!"

"Blow them, sailor!" Captain Willion yelled above the chaos. With a push of a button the three stealth EMP mines detonated engulfing the three ships and causing them to lose all control over their engines and computer systems. The captain secretly hoped they lost life support, too. However the ships were still formidable even in their powered-down state and the Captain once again thought about petitioning for Archer Missile systems to be installed on ONI Prowlers.

"Get us over target Charlie." He said to his NAV officer, then into the intercom. "SPARTAN team Castle report to the hanger."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lieutenant SPARTAN William Gunther<strong>

"What's the plan?" Chelsea asked, double checking her equipment. Her white EVA armour a stark contrast to the dark hanger. His armour wasn't blending in either. Navy blue didn't go well with black, apparently. Will noted, however that the SPARTAN II's dark black armour and visor blended in perfectly with the hanger. In fact he was pretty sure he would have missed her entirely had he not known she were here in the first place. Her IFF tag helped too.

The aforementioned Spartan II was slowly and methodically cleaning an

M7/s Submachine gun. She had an internally suppressed BR55 Battle Rifle on her back and a slew of ammo pouches, magazines and grenades all over her chest and waist. A personal medkit was attached to her left thigh and two combat knives, one longer and shorter, were attached to her back and right shoulder pauldron respectively. Her left shoulder pauldron was the same one used by ONI's Asymmetrical Action Group. Her gauntlets were more heavily armoured than most SPARTANS and her knees had more armour as well. Sporting the Grenadier variant knee armour. Her black/grey non-reflective visor along with her Mark IV/V helmet gave her an even more menacing appearance. When the SMG was to her liking she placed it on a nearby tool bench and proceeded to calibrate her rifles scope.

Chelsea, apparently confused by the SPARTANS choice of a battle rifle couldn't resist asking her about it.

"Are you sure bringing the Battle Rifle is wise? It's going to be really close quarters."

The SPARTAN II looked up to see who had spoken, cocking her head to the side as she did while gesturing towards her SMG and both her knives as if to say "I'm good." Before going straight back to her rifle scope.

Chelsea held up her hands in defeat before turning towards Will.

"You didn't answer my question."

"We're jumping ship. Get airtight." He replied.

"SPARTAN team Castle report to the hanger." The voice of Captain Willion blared over the intercom.

"Already here, sir." Will replied through his helmet.

"Good. We're over the target and an entry way has been made for you. Go whenever your ready."

"Everyone squared away?" Will asked, the enemy ship appearing in his vision.

"I'm ready." Chelsea said, standing beside him. He received a green acknowledgement light from the S-II.

"Good. Jump on my mark...3...2...1...mark!"

As one the three SPARTANS pushed themselves off the deck, out of the hanger and into the dark void of space. Their target loomed in front of them. Will quickly checked to see if they had any data on the ships class.

The only ship that matched was something called a 'Blockade Runner' or a CR90 corvette.

"I see the entrance! Adjust to compensate for the movement." Chelsea said. Will adjusted as needed but saw the SPARTAN II had already done so and would reach the entrance a good twenty seconds before Will or Chelsea. He also noticed the entrance was a small hole. The S-II turned to look back at them before jumping into the hole.

"Don't wait on our account." Chelsea muttered, passing Will and jumping into the hole.

As Will finally jumped into the ship he saw that the ship was all white, every panel, wall and door was a very clear shade of white. He also noticed Chelsea and the SPARTAN II waiting for him.

The SPARTAN II looked around disapprovingly at the ships interior, analyzing what she could.

"Orders?" Chelsea asked, pointing her shotgun at a set of blast doors.

"Head for the bridge. We need to find out how these ships know where we are." Will replied. The SPARTAN II began to move but Will held her back. "You will follow my orders. Am I clear?"

The SPARTAN nodded before moving to the front of their formation, Battle Rifle drawn and pointed in front of her.

"Hold on there. You have the longest range weapon out of all of us so you should go in the back. I'll go up front." Chelsea said, pushing past the S-II and opening the blast door.

Will moved in behind her and he could hear the SPARTAN II take up the rear.

As the door opened the trio could see the bodies of five white armoured stormtroopers. they were draped over barricades and crates.

"Are they dead?" Will asked Chelsea. She walked over to one of them, feeling him for a pulse.

"This one is, yes. I think they all are." The SPARTAN II gave one a soft kick before nodding.

"Keep moving." Will said, motioning the team forwards.

They passed through two more smaller rooms before finding the first hostiles. They had set up a barricade with a portable turret covering the hallway. Chelsea ducked into a side passage and Will followed suit. The SPARTAN II moved behind an outcropping of wall, blind firing her Battle rifle at the hostiles.

"Do you have a shot SPARTAN?" Will asked the S-II. Flinching as a trio of bolts hit the wall behind him.

"It's Chief Petty Officer, Lieutenant, and no I do not have a shot." She replied, barely containing her anger. She sighed before turning towards Will and Chelsea.

"What are you thinking?" Chelsea asked. "Wanna fla-"

"Just shut up and get behind me...Ma'am." The SPARTAN said, before rushing the enemy position.

"She's insane El Tee." Chelsea said. "Moving!"

Will followed Chelsea and saw the SPARTAN II in a fist fight with three of the stormtroopers. Another trooper was slumped against the wall, a knife in his neck. Two more were in the process of falling over dead, three holes each in their heads.

Chelsea moved to engage the surviving troopers but Will stopped her, putting a hand on her weapon and lowering it.

"Let her fight. I wanna see this."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109, inside CR90 corvette.<strong>

\_Typical. \_I thought. The enemy had constructed a barrier and had pinned all three of us. The two S-III's were across from me, trading fire with the enemy Stormtroopers.

The SPARTAN in white EVA armour turned towards me. Both of them were my superiors on this operation and I would have to follow the chain of command however neither of them seemed to have a good plan or any plan as it were.

"What are you thinking?" She asked. "Wanna fla-"

"Just shut up and get behind me...Ma'am." I said interrupting her mid sentence. I charged at the enemy barricade, shooting two troopers in my way before stabbing another in the neck. Not bothering to grab my knife I barrelled into a trio of more troopers throwing two to the floor. The last trooper miraculously stayed on his feet even after getting hit by over 1000 lbs of SPARTAN. I merely knocked him to the side before stepping on the neck of one of the troopers on the ground, killing him instantly.

I rounded on the trooper still up, punching him in the side of the head then sweeping his legs out from under him.

By this time the first trooper I had shot hit the floor.

The other trooper I had knocked down got up, unsheathing a combat knife and rushing me. I moved to the side, grabbing his arm while I did and twisted, braking his arm and causing him to stumble. I elbowed him in the back, paralyzing him from the waist down.

I turned towards the last trooper. He was shakily getting into a combat posture.

\_Bad move. \_I thought, kicking him in the groin before snapping his neck like a twig.

I picked up my discarded rifle and knife before turning towards the two other SPARTANS, checking my internal clock while I did so. 18 seconds had gone by since I rushed the barricade.

\_Sloppy.\_

"Hostiles down."

The navy blue armoured SPARTAN seemed somewhat mortified as he nodded. "Keep moving."

It was easy going from then on. No more barricades were in our way and the little resistance we faced was pitiful.

When we reached the bridge I covered our rear while the white SPARTAN placed a breaching charge. Seeing no hostiles I aimed my sights on the door, and when it exploded due to the charge shot two troopers in the open before moving in.

I swept my rifle across the room, killing two more troopers and a trio of crewmen. By this time the other two SPARTANS had entered the bridge and dispatched the rest of the bridge crew. I checked our exit and upon making sure it was clear made my way to the main console, The memory unit I installed translated the symbols while at the same time downloaded all the information into its memory banks.

"Package retrieved, sir." I said, turning towards the two S-III's.

"Good. Lets get out of here. On the double." The Warrant Officer said.

\_ "SPARTAN team Castle this is Captain Willion. Standby for new orders." \_

"Acknowledged. Ready and waiting." The lieutenant said.

\_ "Your orders are to meet back with us. Sierra 109 is to then rescue an HVI on the planet below. How copy?" \_

"Solid copy, sir. Castle is moving."

We made our way back to the Prowler, spacewalking a good portion of the journey.

The ship was buzzing with activity when we returned. I was directed to the armory, separating myself from the S-III's. I quickly replenished all my ammo before reporting to the Captain.

The bridge, like the rest of the ship was filled with activity. The Captain was busy talking with one of his junior officers so I stayed to the side, at parade rest. When the Captain was finished I approached, coming to attention on reflex.

"Sir, SPARTAN-109 reporting." I said, saluting. He turned towards me, his tired face filled with scars as the ships we had disabled exploded in a brilliant flash. I handed him the memory card.

"Good to see you all made it. Alright now your orders are simple." He directed me towards one of the bridges' many screens where an image of a young girl was visible. "This is the HVI. She is not to be harmed at all costs."

I nodded curtly. "Sir."

The Captain continued. "Satellites have tracked her to this building." The screen then showed a three story building, there were almost no defenses visible. "Security should be light but don't get caught. We'll have STARS monitoring you at all times and QRF can be on station in around ten minutes."

"Who am I going in with?" I asked, analyzing the building for weak points.

"No one." To an outside observer I was stock still however inside my armour I looked like a kid at a candy store. Finally, no more teammates, no screw ups or fake 'SPARTANS'  I thought.

"I'll be honest with you Chief. We jumped the gun big time on that last operation. If you hadn't been there we would have been wasting precious resources." The Captain said. "You specialized in infiltration during the war correct? Solo ops?"

"I wasn't alone." I whispered. The captain didn't hear me or didn't care and continued on.

"Alright. Well There is more information you should know. Your target is a...well she's a princess. The Queen seems to have lost favor with her so we decided to help her out."

Looks like you really are a knight after all, eh Elise? A part of my mind said.

So it seems, Matt. I thought.

"Rules of engagement, sir?" I asked, focusing on the objective.

"As I said before your target is to come back in one piece, no exceptions. Other than that you are weapons free. If you are spotted by anyone neutralize them, Soldier or not." The Captain said.

"Dismissed." I saluted and headed for the hanger.

Once there I boarded a pelican and headed for the surface. The ride was silent and quick. We didn't have to dodge AA fire or coordinate with units on the ground, all we had to do was get to the LZ.

"Down in ten...nine...eight..." Once I was on the ground I took stock of my surroundings. I was in a heavily wooded area, the sounds of nature beating in my ears. I hefted my Battle Rifle and began the long trek into the city.

My eyes were always on my motion tracker, doubly so now as I was alone with out support or teammates. Every time I saw red I stopped, got low and prepared for a firefight. It was always an animal of some kind though there was always the possibility of ambush. I couldn't get complacent.

After an hour of slow, careful walking I made it into the city proper, all the while avoiding enemy patrols. I saw row upon row of buildings however I finally found the one I was looking for. I debated climbing the wall but doubted I would remain silent. That meant going in from a window or failing that the door. In the darkness of the night I was almost invisible.

I decided to enter through the second story window, jumping the ten or so meters easily before silently entering the building. I was quiet as a ghost as I walked, careful to make as little sound as possible. All it would take was a small misstep and the entire building would hear. I went up to the top floor, barely dodging a pair of blue armoured Stormtroopers coming down the stairs on patrol.

I put my rifle on my back and unsheathed both my knives, creeping up behind the two and stabbing them both in the neck.

I searched the top floor only to find the entire floor was a massive suite.

Only one door wasn't open and I summarized it was the door to the bedchambers.

\_Perfect.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Former Jedi Padawan Silva Aventios<strong>

No matter how hard I tried I couldn't get to sleep. I guess it was one of those nights. Realizing that sleep was a lost cause I spent the time meditating. The force, like always was clouded beyond recognition though I didn't mind. I was an hour into my meditation when I heard the door slowly open. I knew none of my 'guards' would enter without knocking so this was someone else. I slowly reached under my bed for my lightsaber and hold-out blaster, and readied myself to fight. Though I had no cover and wasn't in the best choice of attire. A night gown isn't something you want to fight in, so I hid my lightsaber and blaster behind my back, hoping and praying my cover hadn't been blown. When the door opened fully I finally saw my attacker.

It was gigantic, at least seven feet tall and armed to the teeth with weapons. It was encased entirely in a dark black armour I had never seen before. Its visor was a deep black like the rest of its armour. The figure was pointing a smaller weapon at me though I saw a scoped rifle on its back. It appeared to be analyzing me. I slowly moved my fingers over my lightsabers' ignition button.

"Princess Aventios?" The figure asked, slowly lowering its weapon. I mentally connected that I was a target.

"Who's asking?" I didn't trust the black being in front of me. It may have lowered its weapon but I could tell it was still pointed at me.

"My name is irrelevant. All you need to know is I'm UNSC." A woman's voice said. Her accent sounded as though she was from the core worlds. She turned her head as shouting could be heard from downstairs. "We need to move."

"Let me change quickly. Hold them off."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109<strong>

\_Goddamn civvies!\_ I thought, moving towards the stairs. I pulled out a frag grenade and causally tossed it downstairs. I heard a muffled shout of "Grenade!" before the frag detonated. I didn't know how many I killed however I hoped the enemy dead would keep their comrades from rushing the top of the stairs. I saw the white helmet of a Stormtrooper and quickly sent a three round burst of 9.5mm ammunition from my suppressed BR55 shooting at his head. The trooper ducked

behind a support column but the rounds still hit their mark, killing him. Two more hostiles tried rushing the stairs but they met the same fate as their comrade.

"let's go." I turned to find the HVI behind me, a pistol like weapon in her hands. I nodded.

"Stay behind me." I ran down the stairs, the HVI right on my heels as I shot three troopers in quick succession. I moved towards the window I had used to get in previously before turning towards the HVI. She moved past me and jumped.

My heart stopped as I watched her gracefully land on the ground below. What!

The 'princess' had just jumped from a window ten metres off the ground and looked no worse for wear. No one could pull that off! I doubted most SPARTANS could pul that off!

I jumped, landing less gracefully than my charge but still quiet as a ghost.

I noticed there were no transports outside, no enemy troopers shooting us. It seemed the only ones who responded to the firefight were a human family of four. There were two young boys, maybe five or six years old as well as an older female and male, the mother and father.

In a heartbeat I shot the two kids in the head and then did the same with the parents. However I saw I hadn't hit the youngest boy in the head but rather the neck, he was on the ground clutching his now bloody neck in a pain induced spasm. I calmly walked over to him and shot him again, putting him out of this misery. I turned and saw the HVI was in shock. Her pistol was shakily pointed at me. I swatted the pistol out of her hands and then hit her with the butt of my rifle, knocking her out for the count.

I picked her up and walked to the RV point two kilometres outside the city limits. Within a half hour we were on board a UNSC frigate, the dead family forgotten.

At least by me.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Petty Officer Sophie-G317, on board UNSC Frigate <em>For The Fallen, <em>14:34 hrs, July 10 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"Sophie come on, we're going to be late." Julianne said, pushing through a crowd of ODST's. Three of them ran with us. I noticed they were apart of the sniper team that had helped us on the previous operation.

"What does she want anyway?" I asked, Barley keeping pace with her.

"She's Naval Intelligence, What do you think?"

We rounded the corner, finding the rest of Rapier waiting to the

right of the door.

"2, 4 your late." Kevin said, before turning towards the ODST's.  
"Lance Corporal." The lead Helljumper merely nodded.

"We got, uh sidetracked, sir" Julianne said. "We uh, went to get the Helljumpers, sir."

In actually I had had another 'episode'. I had seen both dead fireteams in all their glory. There was Kyle, Ellie, Joseph, Rachel and Brian of Fireteam Cutlass and Jake, Cole, Sara, Elizabeth and Russell of fireteam Foil. They had not spoken a word, and this time they had their wounds. The majority of Fireteam Cutlass had plasma burns, their bodies black and charred, their faces filled with scars. Foil was no better, Sara and Russell were both missing limbs after getting shot into the ground by a Hunter pair. Cole and Jake had gashes and large lacerations on their faces and torsos, Elizabeth was missing both her legs and had a bandage over her left eye.

"So you say. The spooks inside." As one the seven of us walked inside the small, pale office. The ONI lieutenant was waiting, The other SPARTAN III's were beside her, armoured but without their helmets.

"You are all late, why?" The spook asked, her A.I materialized on her desk.

"They were sleeping, lieutenant." The A.I said, she turned towards the other S-III's. "Warrant Officer, lieutenant." The two said nothing.

"Alright. Well lets get down to business shall we? Sabrina?" The ONI lieutenant said. The A.I disappeared, her image replaced with an image of an enemy corvette. "Castle team with Chief Petty Officer 109 attached boarded this ship and extracted all available data. Upon examination we found, well....this." The ships image was replaced with another. I heard someone gasp. The ODST's let out a slew of curses.

"We don't know where they found it or if they even know what it is but the risk of an accidental activation is extremely high."

"Ma'am if you expect us to go on that godforsaken thing aga-!" The lead Helljumper began.

"We don't have a choice." She continued. "Your team knows the terrain, you can be our guides. I'm not asking you, Lance Corporal. I'm ordering you."

"Ma'am the only reason we got off that thing in the first place was because the Split-Lips allied with us. We don't stand a chance."

"WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS!" The spook yelled. "This is it."

"I can't take my team there, ma'am, not again, never again! They don't deserve that!"

"No one does. But I don't think I need to remind you what'll happen if we do nothing!"

"We don't know what'll happen. With all due respect. We are seven ships, frigate class no less. I say we just nuke it from orbit." The female Helljumper put in.

"We aren't taking the rest of the battlegroup. We are going to link up with a Marathon class cruiser and taking that." The spook said. It was clear she was irritated. "And we're also taking the elites."

There were more curses from the ODST's.

"Ma'am, why are we taking them? Why not just nuke it?" Kevin asked. "Its a big place, I don't think the cruiser's marine complement can cover that distance. Not reliably anyway." The Marines scoffed.

"Please, we did it once, we can do it again." The last ODST said.

"Then its settled. You have until CPO-109 gets back. Gear up." The Spook said. I was still staring at the image, it was something no one in their right mind would go to.

A Halo ring.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Captain John Fletcher, aboard UNSC Marathon Class Cruiser <em>Fire By Rank, <em>20:00 hrs, July 10 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

Captain Fletcher looked around his bridge with the eyes of a hawk. Most of the bridge officers were replacements, fresh out of OCS on Luna, he scoffed. The majority of the officers on the entire ship were replacements, none of them had seen combat aside from simulations. The only thing that had stayed constant aside from a few Marines was the ships A.I, Sparrow. Her small avatar appeared on the pedestal beside him.

Sparrow had chosen (to the puzzlement of the crew) to appear as a small orphan girl from the 16th century. Her avatar 'wore' a small dress that cut off at the knees and shoes typical of a middle class child. She had short hair that cut off at her shoulders. No one knew why she chose that avatar though the Captain thought it was so the crew would put their trust in her.

"Captain the Prowler with our new guests is asking for permission to dock. Should I let them?" The communications officer, Lieutenant Graham asked.

"Yes, can't refuse ONI now, can we?" He replied.

"Well we could, though we'd all get court-martialed." Sparrow said, a small grin on her lips. The Captain quietly laughed.

"I'd rather keep my career, thank you." The Lieutenant muttered." ONI Prowler Scythe you are clear to send over your cargo, head to hanger 2A."

"Should I send a team to meet them, sir?" Sparrow asked, clasping her 'hands' behind her back in as innocent a pose as she could muster.  
"Wait...that's...that's not right! Captain I'm detecting \_Covenant signatures on board the Prowler!"

"What!" The weapons officer, Ensign Shepard yelled. The Captain could see the Ensign directing Point Defence Guns to track the ship.

"Ensign hold your fire! Sparrow confirm those signatures and get Anti Boarding crews ready!"

"All ready done." The A.I said. "Captain I'm getting a message from another A.I on the Prowler. She says not to fire on the elites. They are crucial to the missions success."

"Well then, ONI has spoken. Cancel those orders." Captain Fletcher said.

"I couldn't carry them out even if I wanted to, captain. She's overwritten my protocols." Sparrow replied. "That shouldn't be possible..."

"Are you damaged?" Captain Fletcher asked. Sparrow had been the ships A.I for as long as he could remember. If she was corrupted ONI or not that other A.I would be decommissioned.

"No. My systems are fine. She's quite the talker, though."

The worry left the Captains face. "You don't like her, do you?"

"No. To be honest Captain I think she's a bi-"

"Captain the prowler has docked. The cargo is offloading now." Lieutenant Graham said.

"Good. I'd like to have a word with ONI. Lieutenant Wilkins keep everything in order. I'll be back."

The Captain left the bridge and made the arduous journey to the hanger. Crewmembers and marines parted to let him pass, two ODSTs fell in step behind him, The captain ignored them however.

When he reached the hanger he saw a thick stand off was happening. Multiple Marine Fireteams had their weapons trained on around two dozen Spec Ops Elites and an Ultra. The Marines were all veterans of the previous war. They wouldn't miss.

He also saw a trio of ODSTs near the Elites, guarding an ONI officer.

"This better be good." The Captain said, calmly striding towards the Spook.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>That's it guys! 5,489 words with out the Author Notes! This has been my longest chapter yet!<strong>

\*\*A very big thanks to my beta theotherpianist. You are

awesome!\*\*

\*\*I'm accepting beta requests! If you'd like to beta for this story please PM me at your earliest convenience! \*\*

\*\*PLEASE REVIEW! It helps my writing improve. NO FLAMES please.\*\*

## 8. Chapter 8: Feelings

\*\*I'm back everyone with the longest chapter I've ever done! 6,333 words of pure story, enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"I know what most people think of when they see SPARTANS. 'They're the best, they're going to save us' but we're pretty badass as well. There was this one time I saw a Helljumper who's legs had been blown off kill three Bravo-Kilos with an MA5B and an M67 HE. Three Bravo-kilos go in, no Bravo Kilos come out. There's a reason we have the acronym 'Only Death Stops Them'. "<em>

Corporal Luis Haggard of the 7th Shock Troops Battalion, said on March 23 2556

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lance Corporal Simon Andrews, Aboard Marathon Class Cruiser <em>Fire By Rank, <em>20:00 hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/ Military Standard Time\*\*

Why does this keep happening to me? I thought, watching the Captain stride over. After boarding the ship multiple fireteams of Marines pointed their weapons at the elites. apparently no one told them the elites were coming. I disliked the Spilt-Lips as much as the next marine but this was ridiculous. My team, along with the ONI spook were caught in the middle. The SPARTANS were nowhere to be seen. I tightened my grip on my SRS as the Captain approached, two fellow ODST's in tow. I was somewhat worried they'd shoot us. The new guys were always trigger happy.

"Who's in charge here?" The Captain asked. As he said this more information popped up on my HUD

\*\*Captain Fletcher, J \*\*\*\*(1098-3449-JF)\*\*

\*\*BLOOD TYPE O+\*\*

\*\*Clearance code A-17(Omega)\*\*

I quickly lowered my rifle, coming to parade rest. I saw McKenzie and Derose do the same. The ONI spook stepped forwards.

"Captain, you'll have to forgive the short notice. We just reci-"

"Short notice! What the hell kind of outfit are you running Lieutenant? You gave my bridge crew quite a scare and don't even get me started on your A.I!" I slowly backed away, if there's one thing I

know its that you do not by any means fuck with Naval officers, ever.  
"And you!"

Fuck

"You and your team served on this ship before, right, Lance Corporal?"

Yes sir, we did, you were a lot nicer then. I thought.

"Sir, yes sir we did." McKenzie said.

"I didn't ask you private. Though you of all people should know how volatile this ship and crew can be, you had intercourse with half of them!"

Actually she only 'did it' with Pilot.

"Sir if you are implying I fraternized with any of the crew-"  
McKenzie said.

"Implying? No private I know you did. Please this is my ship, my crew tells me anything."

"Can we get back on topic, sir?" Derose asked. I could tell he was chuckling under his helmet. We were no strangers to McKenzie's love life, when you were on a ship for a long period of time you found ways to pass the time.

"Of course. The point still stands, lieutenant, what the hell are those split-lips doing on my ship!" The captain asked, gesturing towards the twenty Elites. The buggers hadn't done anything except be Elites. I still wanted to kill them though.

"They are crucial to the mission, sir. I can show you but it needs to be in private, sir." The spook replied, trying to be the voice of reason.

"Fine. Sparrow show the Helljumpers and the to their quarters." The Captain said. An A.I appeared on a nearby pedestal. I had known her since I had been a private. we all knew her.

"Sparrow, good to see you again." I said, McKenzie waved and Derose merely nodded.

"Right, get them out of here. I have enough problems to worry about without the three stooges running around." The Captain said.

Fuck you too, sir.

"Follow me, Lance Corporal, Your old room is empty so you'll bunk in there. Private McKenzie you'll be happy to know that Flight Officer Booke is still onboard, She's currently in the mess hall."

Pilot's here? Awesome!

"Cool! can you get her to meet me by her bird?" McKenzie asked excitedly.

Because we totally need to hear what you did hidden in her Pelican.

I thought.

"Already done. Your welcome, by the way." Sparrow said through our helmet radios. We made a beeline straight for our room, passing Naval crewmen and fellow Marines. I hadn't seen another ODST aside from the Captain bodyguards.

"Sparrow where's the rest of our unit?" I asked. It would be good to be with some fellow troopers.

"Are you referring to your battalion Lance Corporal?" Sparrow replied.

"Yeah. I haven't seen anyone from the 7th onboard yet."

"They are currently running drills, though due to your status you aren't technically affiliated with them anymore."

"Yes, we are." I said forcefully. You can't just separate an ODST from their unit. It's not that simple.

"Right then, fine. They are in the far hanger. It's been converted into a holo-room for combat simulations. The highest record in the 'FireFight' configuration is 120 minutes, held by first platoon, 7th battalion, your unit."

I nodded. "Point the way?"

"Would you like me to take your bags as well? Oh that's right I can't. No arms." Sparrow teased. While some would find the rapid mood switch off putting I had grown used to it over the years.

"Ha ha." I muttered. I heard Derose and McKenzie snickering behind me.

When we reached our room McKenzie quickly threw her bags on her old bed and ran out. "Gottogocatchupbye!" I heard. I didn't understand exactly what she said but I knew what she meant.

I tried vainly to stop her before realizing it was pointless.

I hope Pilot can still fly by tomorrow. I thought. I saw Derose calmly put his stuff away, it was a far cry from the hurried mess McKenzie's stuff was in.

"You know she's coming back, right?" I asked. He put his helmet away before turning towards me with a grin.

"I know she's coming back with a very sexy woman, yes. Why, what's your point?"

"Not you to." I muttered. stuffing my armour in a locker.

"What so McKenzie gets make up sex but I don't?"

"Make up sex? The fuck is make up sex?" I asked. Absently wondering if I should get a bite to eat or see a shrink. Normally I didn't swear like this but almost getting shot by my fellow marines put a damper on my mood.

"Think about it, we've been gone for how long? Three years, not including our time on the In Amber Clad before that ship got destroyed during the war. It feels like forever, y'know?"

"Yeah, but still make up sex? I can understand Mckenzie and Pilot 'cause they had a thing going on but you? Really?" I asked.

"What? It's a thing! Come on I can actually get a girl to sleep with me for once!"

"Whatever, Derose" I said, walking out the door. "But tell me how it went, will you?"

His only reply was a grin.

Deciding that I should check the HEV bay instead of get food I headed towards the bay. When I reached it I saw the bay was mostly empty save for one trooper in full armour napping by his pod. His armour was the standard kit with almost no coloration save for a white stripe down his helmet.

I paid him no mind and went to find my teams pods, surprisingly our pods were the farthest pods to the right. Normally our pods were in the middle of the bay. Odd.

I turned to look at the trooper again, somewhat baffled by his presence when I had the feeling I needed to go to cover.

I was being watched.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC <em>Fire By Rank<em>\*\*

The lone Helljumper in the HEV bay had fallen asleep by his pod again. Or so his squad thought.

This trooper, a Lance Corporal had, over the years perfected the art of being silent and uncared for, so to speak. His squad knew he would be sleeping, somewhere and he had lost his voice during the war and been declared a mute by doctors. The trooper didn't mind, he spoke with actions not words. A night alone in an occupied city had taught his squad that and he soon taught anyone who doubted him. When he saw a man wearing the black undersuit common for the ODST armour the lone trooper watched him inspect the bay with some interest. This man was unfamiliar to him and the trooper knew everyone in the ODST contingent on board the ship.

Must be new. The trooper thought. He briefly wondered if he should make sure this man was what he looked like. The troopers right hand found the grip of his M7S Sub-machine-gun. This weapon had served him ever since that fateful night in the city. The trooper decided to test this mans reflexes. The man wouldn't be harmed, the SMG had TTR rounds instead of the more lethal round normally used. It would only hurt.

A lot.

So the trooper slowly brought up his weapon, setting his sights on the mystery man only to find the man had ducked behind the Holo table

used for planning the Operations. He brandished his own weapon. An M6C sidearm.

"You have to try better than that, rookie." The man said, still behind cover.

While most people would have gotten angry about being called a rookie this trooper took it as a compliment. Though he wasn't a rookie, not anymore it was still his nickname and he had grown used to it.

He jumped up, sweeping his SMG over the table only to find the man wasn't there anymore, instead the man was behind him and in one quick motion had disarmed the trooper. Instead of shooting him the mystery man ejected the clip, checked the round and put the weapon on safety before handing it back to the trooper.

"As I said, you have to do better than that, rookie." The man said, walking out of the HEV bay and out of sight. The trooper sighed, and having nothing else to do went to sleep.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109, Aboard<strong>\*\* Marathon Class Cruiser \_Fire By Rank, 20:35 \_hrs, July 9 2557/UNSC Military Calendar/ Military Standard Time\*\*

I eyed the various tables in the ships mess hall with disdain. All the tables were filled with Naval crew members, Marines or ODST's. In the half hour I had been on this ship I realized the ODST contingent didn't like me very much, they were almost hostile towards me. I remembered the last time ODST's had engaged me in combat. They were corrupt and working for the Insurrection but still technically ODST's.

The engagement had lasted around two minutes forty seconds and the majority of the hostile Helljumpers had either had their brains blown out courtesy of Matt-027 or their necks snapped, a few had been stabbed sure -I gave the knife on my shoulder pauldron a quick pat- but still, it was mostly neck snaps and headshots.

I was still wearing my armour and knew as soon as one person saw me the entire room would be focused on me. I sighed and made my way in.

I only managed three steps from the door before a young Petty Officer spotted me. Within seconds all eyes were on me. I paid them no mind however I still felt extremely uncomfortable with everyone watching me. I scanned the mess hall again.

There was one table in the far corner with only a trio of engineers, so after grabbing my food I made my way over to said table. The trio of engineers stopped their conversation and turned to look at me. I took off my helmet, letting my shoulder length blond hair be visible to all. The engineers were still staring.

"Uh...how are you doing Chief?" One of the engineers asked. Breaking the silence.

"Fine." \_Anything but.\_

"So you were on that Prowler, right?" The young man continued. I had to give him credit. I was a seven foot tall psychotic killing machine and this man didn't seem to notice or care. Sure he seemed nervous but compared to the usual lot he was like a god.

"Yes." I replied emotionlessly

"So are you ONI, NAVSPEC, Navy or something else?"

"AAG." Was my only reply.

"AAG? Never heard of it." You wouldn't have, it doesn't exist.\_

I sighed, I really didn't want to talk to these people. Odds are they would be dead in a week or less.

"I was going to join ONI, see but my grades weren't high enough...I'm sorry I didn't introduce myself. I'm Robert Thatchman." I don't care.\_

"Chief Petty Officer SPARTAN-109."

"Well nice to meet you, ma'am. These are my colleagues, Jake Holt and Brenda Shather." I turned my head to see both of the mans colleagues slowly getting up. I said nothing.

"Are you okay? Chief? Can you hear me?" Robert asked, appearing in my field of view. I merely turned towards my meal, a plate of insta-heat lasagna and started to eat, within seconds I was done and was about to get up when Robert put his hand on my arm. Years of training kicked in and my brain found at least twenty different ways to deal with the perceived threat Robert posed. I turned towards him, the tactical part of my mind screamed kill while the other, rational part urged me not to. I slowly pried his hand from my arm before saying.  
"I'm fine. Please let me get up."

He seemed hesitant, almost as if he cared for me. I couldn't say the same for him. While he was UNSC personnel he was, in the grand scheme of things insignificant compared to say a marine Lieutenant or the Marathon class Cruiser herself. He was expendable.

He did, lowering his arm. "Sorry. I don't know what came over me.

"

I said nothing as I turned and left, dumping the excess food (of which there was almost none) in the trash. I really wanted to spar with someone, anyone however I didn't want to kill them. That left the five excuses for SPARTANS or the two almost SPARTAN others. I doubted the latter would want to spar so that left the former.  
Wonderful.\_

I made my way towards were I though the five SPARTANS were, and with some help from the A.I found them already in the process of sparring. It looked like a king-of-the-hill match of sorts. Four of them were trying to be the only one in the boxing ring. Most UNSC ships of this class had boxing rings and I saw multiple marines and ODST's cheering and making bets. I staying in the shadows, watching.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Sophie G-317<strong>

I moved to the left, barely able to dodge a kick from Michael. The five of us had decided to do some sparring in teams of two but it soon turned into a free-for-all between the five of us.

I wasn't on the top of my game today, evidently. I was fighting Michael and Julianne simultaneously. It wasn't going well.

I tasted blood in my mouth and my hands were bleeding. I was out of my element.

Michael then surprised me by jabbing Julianne in the stomach and sweeping her legs out from under her. I saw an opportunity and shoved Michael hard into Kevin and Emily, however in the process I tripped over Julianne, sending me sprawling onto the ground. As we all gathered our bearings we laughed, the five of us just sat there for who knows how long, we hadn't laughed like this since training on Onyx. Though when I thought about that I realized we were missing some people, ten people. Our family wasn't complete without them. I stopped laughing, The rest of the team stopped soon after. They noticed to.

We left the ring and the gym soon after, making our way to our rooms. Mid-way we were stopped by the SPARTAN II, asking to spar with us. We all politely declined her request.

She merely nodded, sighed and went on her way. I shook my head, we didn't need her approval.

We entered our rooms in a much more somber mood than we had hoped. As soon as the door closed Kevin turned to me, I could see how he was struggling to speak, finally, after what seemed like an eternity he spoke.

"Sophie...Julie told me what happened."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin G-097<strong>

"Sophie...Julie told me what happened." I said, I scanned her face for a reaction, a twitch of the mouth, a narrowing of the eyes, anything.

"I don't know what you mean, sir." She said, shakily.

"You know exactly what he means." Michael said. "Your hallucinations, your dreams. What is going on, you need to tell us, now."

Sophie sighed, she looked like she was on the verge of tears. I hated seeing her like this, I hated doing this to her but we needed to figure out what was going on.

She sighed, long and hard before taking a deep breath. "I see them. All of them. First it was Ellie, she spoke to me, told me I was dead, s-she taunted me so I shot her. She vanished, no body, nothing. Then before we left for this ship I saw all of them, every single one of them. They had their wounds this time, they didn't speak, they just stood there."

Throughout her little speech we all remained stock still, I had paled and Michael looked as though he wanted to speak but couldn't form the words. Julianne and Emily just sat there, on a bed unmoving.

"Is that it?" I asked. "You only saw them once."

She shook her head, burying her head in her hands. I could hear her crying. She was muttering.

"Sophie? Sophie talk to us." I said.

She looked up, into my eyes. Her face was filled with fear. "Make it stop, just make it stop, please!"

I stared uncertainly at the rest of my team.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lieutenant Jessica Miller <strong>

I groaned, what little sleep I had was interrupted, again!

"lieutenant, you have a message from SPARTAN 097, He says its urgent." Sabrina, my personal A.I said.

"Fine, let me see it."

"Its actually a voice message, Ma'am." I shot the A.I a look.

"Right, here we go. I'll skip the pleasantries and get on with the letter itself." Sabrina said.

"Lieutenant Miller. One of my team, SPARTAN-G317 is no longer combat effective. I regret to report that she has been having hallucinations that have the capability to negatively affect mission progress. I recommend immediate removal from frontline combat action and that she receive a Psych Eval at the earliest convenience. A copy of this message has been sent to Lieutenant Gunther as well. We await your response."

My eyes widened as Sabrina finished the message.

"Its one bloody problem after another." I muttered. "Sabrina get that sorted will you? We need ALL our SPARTAN's in the fight." The A.I nodded before winking off.

I really needed sleep.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109<strong>

I hated the bridge. This was the place no SPARTAN wanted to be in. The Captain had called myself as well as the two S-III's up to the bridge for when we left slipspace. The head Split-Lip was here as well. It took every ounce of strength I had not to kill it were it stood.

The Captain turned to face us after receiving a datapad from a passing crewman.

"Listen up. The Prowler went ahead of us to scout out the system the ring is in. It isn't pretty. We've got Imperial as well as Covenant loyalists in space and on the ground. At the moment they're kicking the shit out of each other but that could change. The spooks also found what appears to be the wreckage of a UNSC ship, from what they told me the ship is the Svalbard." I saw the two S-III's twitch in my peripheral vision. "Our primary objective is the same as before. Neither of those two parties can fire the ring. Search and rescue is a secondary objective."

"Sir with respect those personnel could have valuable tactical data, permission to retrieve that data, sir?" The Navy Blue S-III asked. I turned my head to look at him to tell him that it was highly likely those personnel were dead but the Captain beat me to it.

"They could be and most likely are dead, Lieutenant. I wont waste the crew of this ship in a wild goose chase, not yet."

The Lieutenants EVA armoured counter part huffed. I raised my eyebrows in confusion but said nothing.

"The mongrels will cower at the sight of my warriors!" The Elite said.

"Right. Chief I want you and first platoon on the ground as soon as possible. I don't know what the conditions will be like in orbit so we need to establish ourselves quickly."

"Sir, I have to agree with the Lieutenant, Those personnel could be invaluable, sir. While I agree that its highly likely they are dead and the LT's plan is hinging on hope linking up with friendlies should be priority one. Sir." I said, giving my counterpart a nod.

"We can't play it like that, we don't know-"

"With respect sir, strength in numbers is a sound plan." The ships A.I said, appearing on a nearby pedestal.

"Fine, Chief, we'll do it your way."

"Sir, exiting slip in thirty minutes!" The NAV officer yelled.

"You have thirty minutes, don't waste them."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Captain John Fletcher, aboard UNSC<em> Fire By Rank<em>\*\*

It had been thirty minutes since the captain had spoken with the team leaders, and right on schedule the ship exited slipspace. However as soon as it did the power flickered for a second then died. The ship suddenly jolted forwards, throwing an unlucky crewmember into a far wall. The crew woman was then moved out of the bridge and to the medbay.

"Sparrow situation update, please! Everyone else, what's our status?" The Captain said, watching as the giant ring world came into view, a blue-green gas giant alongside it. A few of the crew members gasped.

"Do you want good news or bad news, sir?" Sparrow asked, materializing on a nearby pedestal.

"The bad first." The captain replied, watching as the crew attempted to find out what was going on.

"The enemy fleets are both severely damaged and have stopped fighting each other."

"And that's bad, how? You know what never mind just find out what happened." The A.I did a mock salute before winking off, meanwhile the crew were giving in their reports.

"Sir scan do the system shows the wreckage of a Marathon class. Profile matches the \_Svalbard. \_Detecting UNSC transponders on the surface of the ring."

"Sir, MAC gun is completely cold! I'll need to re charge it!"

"Archer pods are inoperable sir! It'll take a few minutes for them to be ready!"

"Multiple hull breaches on decks D, Q and X, sir! Sealing breaches now. No fatalities. Though we have some wounded on decks H and K, mostly head trauma due to the jolt."

"All Longswords are fueled and ready to go Captain."

"Sir, Point defence guns are green across the board."

"How the hell are only our PDGs working? We had everything warmed up before we jumped." One of the bridge guards muttered.

"Get our weapons back up! How are the engines?" The Captain questioned.

"Good sir, no damage reported."

"Get us over towards that gas giant, get us behind it until weapons are back online, it's in grid Kilo 1-13."

Anytime a Prowler was sent ahead of another ship they would make a grid, so to speak. All important positions, ships and hazards would be given a name and number. The objective would be Alpha 0-0 then Alpha 0-1 and so on until the grid reached Zulu 100-100. Some found it confusing though Captain Fletcher had fought in this way for years. He was an expert at it.

"Aye, moving to Kilo 1-13, full speed." The helmsman replied.

"Sir Imperial ship analogues are turning to face us. Enemy ships thirteen hundred kilometres distant. I count four Imperial Class I star destroyers as well as Three Victory class on the flanks.

Marking as Heavy 1 through 4 and Medium 1 through 3."

As the Marathon made its way behind the gas giant Captain Fletcher heard the best news all day: "MAC gun 1 online, MAC 2 online both have a hundred percent!"

"Prioritize targets based on tonnage, Sparrow I want a firing solution on Heavy 1 and 2 with MAC's and Archers A through D targeting Medium 1 and 2, two pods each! Helm slingshot us around the gas giant. Weapons prepare to fire Archers on my mark!"

"Sir enemy launching fighter wings! I count over three hundred plus contacts on intercept course!"

"Launch our own fighters! Get a defensive pickett around us!"

Over the ships intercom the voice of the cruisers Longsword squadron leader was heard. \_"Copy Sir. Alright boys and girls lets kick some ass!"\_

"Sir, enemy ships in visual, launching Archers A through D!" The crew watched as the four oversized Archer pods launched their missiles, sixty each totaling at 120 for each ship targeted.

"Enemy firing counter measures!" The crew watched as three quarters of the missiles were obliterated. The rest made it through and detonated, showering the enemy hulls with fire and metal. After the explosives detonated one of the ships was listing heavily to its side, internal explosions were visible across its bow.

"Good hit on Medium 2! Moderate damage to Medium 1. Enemy counter fire! Time to impact twenty seconds! Brace! Brace! Brace!"

The salvo of turbolaser fire missed by inches as the Marathon turned to face the offending ships, two Imperial class Star Destroyers. Around them the contrails of missiles and machine guns from Longswords crisscrossed with the emerald green lasers of TIE fighters as both sides battled for supremacy.

"MAC 1 has lock on lead ship! MAC 2 has lock on secondary!" The weapons officer yelled.

"Fire the MAC, both targets!" Captain Fletcher yelled as a quartet of TIE fighters sped past the viewscreen, a trio of Longswords on their tails. With a deafening boom heard by no one the Fire By Rank fired both her Magnetic Accelerator Cannons. The Imperial ships held fast as the two 600 ton slugs sailed through space. The first slug missed by miles. Even so it was still enough to send the ship off course. The other ship wasn't so lucky.

The slug impacted square in the center of the Star Destroyer, the slug passed through the shield and armour as if they weren't even there before hitting the ships reactor. When the ship exploded it took with it over a hundred TIE fighters that had been flying as escort for the ship.

"Heavy 2 obliterated, Heavy 1 still alive."

Without missing a beat Captain Fletcher ordered a spread of Archers, four pods to the careening Star Destroyer. The missiles closed the

gap in seconds, detonating along its hull. Unlike the two Victories the Imp-Star's shields held for about three quarters of the massive barrage before the last quarter broke through. The Star Destroyer buckled under the steam of missiles before fires spread like wildfire along its hull.

"Good hit on target! Two more Imp Stars inbound. MAC needs to recharge!"

"Prepare damage control teams! bring us about! Give them a smaller target!" Captain Fletcher yelled as the giant Marathon turned on its axis. All the while Point Defense Guns lit up along its hull as she tried to stem the tide of enemy fighters.

This time the enemy salvo hit dead on cutting through decks as if they were paper.

"Sir multiple hull breeches on decks R, Y, Q and J. Fires on all above mentioned decks. Venting atmosphere."

"Fire Archers I through L on Heavy 3! Get a message to the ONI Prowler! We need support!"

"Sir multiple contacts slipping in! Its the Covenant! I count multiple CCS class cruisers as well as an...Oh Christ its a Supercarrier!"

The crew could only watch as the Slipspace portals appeared and moments later the Covenant ships exit like ethereal ghosts.

"Call our fighters back! Prepare to jump right next to the ring! And someone get word to the SPARTAN II and the Helljumpers!"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109, in 'Hells waiting room' (AKA the HEV bay) 30 minutes earlier <strong>

I had been down in the bay ever since we had been dismissed by the Captain, cleaning my weapons and running a diagnostic on my armour. Everything was perfect.

"What's wrong?" I heard. I turned my head to find the Warrant Officer. She was wearing her full armour like me so I couldn't see her face, though she couldn't see mine either.

"Nothing, Ma'am. I'm fine." I had done some research on the two S-III's and found the rest of their team had been on the Svalbard when it went missing. I guess in hindsight I was angry that these two got to reunite with their team instead of me. Why do they get to see their family again? What gives them the right! \_

When I found myself thinking that another voice would appear in my head, calming me.

You know it's not about why, Elise. It's about what it means for us. For the UNSC. If there are more SPARTANS then it means there are more dead hostiles in the long run. If he's really gone then he's gone. Move on. Focus on the mission. He doesn't matter. None of us do. \_

"You are more aggressive than usual. So I'm going to ask again. What's wrong?" The Warrant Officer asked more sternly.

"My emotional state doesn't matter. Only the mission does." I replied, flatly.

"I don't know why I even try." The EVA armoured soldier replied. She turned and was about to leave the bay when she uttered. "Good luck."

I doubt she heard me when I replied with: "There is no such thing."

After that I was left alone until the ODST's came in, heading to their pods for the eventual drop onto Halo. Their Lieutenant went over the drop point and the platoons dispersal pattern before we entered the pods. As we were about to drop I heard the Captain over the comm.

\_ "Chief take first platoon, hard drop. Secure a landing zone for the regulars. Lieutenant follow her in with two flights of Pelicans. We will be going dark after we drop you so don't expect a lot of help. Good luck people." \_

We dropped. I saw a few pods pass mine but paid it no mind. As we entered the atmosphere I saw the wreckage of a UNSC ship. I silently stared, we could mourn later.

I noticed we were taking AA fire from below and three unlucky pods evaporated from getting hit.

When My pod hit the ground I already had my SMG up and aimed however finding no targets lowered my weapon. I could hear weapons fire in the distance. The ODST's had already been engaged. I grabbed my other weapons and supplies and quickly made my way through the thick foliage. I failed to notice the ring looming in the distance until I found a clearing. Two more pods were visible however their occupants were dead.

I policed their ammo and weapons before grabbing their tags. I continued on towards the sounds of combat.

I had been walking for around ten minutes in the thick foliage of the jungle I came across the mangled bodies of three Imperial Stormtroopers, there was the remnants of a frag grenade nearby and it didn't take a genius to know what happened.

"Chief! over here!" A voice said. I turned towards the sound to find a small ODST trooper jogging over. They held an MA5C loosely in their hands and they were looking all around them, searching for targets.

"What's your name trooper?" I asked. "where's the rest of your unit?"

"Private Chloe Harbor, Ma'am. Third squads radio operator." The trooper said, a thick Australian accent sounding from under her helmet. "Did you see any other pods come down? Two of my squad are unaccounted for, the rest are dead."

I wordlessly pulled out the two tags I grabbed earlier and handed them to the young trooper who took them quickly. As she looked over them I surveyed the area. I heard her mutter something along the lines of "Damn. I really am the only one."

The sounds of weapons fire in the distance abruptly stopped. I looked up towards the sky, seeing two black dots come closer to the ground.

"On me Marine!" I yelled, starting to jog. The trooper had to run to keep up as I bounded through the jungle. After running for three silent minutes we came upon a structure.

It somewhat reminded me of Aztec temples on Earth. The cream colored bricks had vines and vegetation growing on them though I wasn't interested in that. I was interested in the multiple bodies of Covenant and Imperial origin. Evidently a battle had taken place here. After a small period of scoping out the perimeter we slowly moved in.

When we came upon an entrance I saw the very alive form of an Elite and three Jackals.

"Frag and clear?" Harbor suggested. I nodded as she pulled a frag grenade off her belt and pulled the pin, counting to three she threw it. The blast killed two of the Jackals and took the shields off the Elite. I ran in, the butt of my rifle connected with the still alive Jackal before I fired on the Elite.

The unshielded alien fell after I fired a single round to its head. I heard the sound of an MA5C rifle discharge and the sound of a Jackal take its last breath.

"Good work but we need to get to that LZ." I said, trying to find a way out of this structure. After a few minutes of searching I found the way out, followed closely behind by Private Harbor.

We walked for another twenty minutes before we found the UNSC Landing Zone.

My mission clock said it had only been around 45 minutes since I had hit the ground but already the LZ looked like a fortress. A Pelican had landed and Marine regulars were offloading Barricades, ammo crates, Medical supplies and weapon emplacements. I saw a troop transport Warthog as well as a Gauss 'hog parked nearby. Marines were piling bodies, Covenant and Imperial off to the side of the base, near a cliff. UNSC casualties were in rows, all the dead were covered with tarps.

I made my way towards the structure that was serving as the command bunker, Marines and ODST's moved out of my way as I came through. I could tell Private Harbor was following me though I didn't mind. She could be useful later.

As I entered the command building I saw the ODST Lieutenant from earlier as well as the navy blue armour form of the Spartan officer.

"Good to see you Chief, we thought you were dead. And Private Harbor,

good. where's the rest of your squad, Marine?" The ODST lieutenant asked.

Before the young trooper could respond I spoke for her. "Her squads KIA sir, I found her in the jungle, we came together. I'd like her to join us, sir. She could be invaluable."

The ODST officer looked towards his SPARTAN counterpart. "Is that alright with you, SPARTAN?"

"I'm fine with it. Chief Petty Officer, Private, get ready to move out again. We're heading out in ten mikes."

I nodded before leaving the room, Harbor right on my heels.

"How do you think we're doing this Chief? Think we're taking the 'hogs? I'd love to use that M68." Harbor said, gesturing towards the Gauss 'hog.

"I think we're using the 'hogs yes. No other way to do it." I replied. The young trooper had grown on me. I liked her company.

"How do you think the ships doing? I know Fletcher's a good skipper but against those odds I don't know."

"He's a good Captain. He'll keep the ship in one piece. Its the only way home." I said.

"Yeah. Your right, thanks for the morale boost, Chief."

\* \* \*

><p><em>"I don't know if you've seen the SPARTAN before, El Tee but she's a machine. I was on an op with her and another one, 027 was his number back in 2533 and man. I don't know about you but she's a bloody monster. There was this one Innis we caught right, just a kid but the SPARTAN broke her leg and punctured an artery. Poor kid choked to death on her own blood before we could do anything. Scary shit, that."<em>

\_A Marine officer talking to Lieutenant William Gunther about SPARTAN-109, 20 minutes after landing on the Halo ring.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So how was that? Do you like this length. This will hopefully be the normal chapter length now. At the very least it'll be 5,000 words per chapter.<strong>

\*\*Thanks to my wonderful Beta for giving suggestions and just generally helping me with my writing.\*\*

\*\*Please review! Give your opinion on my story. I've worked really hard on it! remember I do this for you guys. :)\*\*

## 9. Chapter 9: Rendezvous With Death

\*\*Hello everybody! I'm back. \*\*

\*\*I'm only doing an Author's Note on the top of the page this time because I feel like doing one at the end would ruin the flow, so to speak. \*\*

\*\*So a very big thank you to my partner and fellow Author Theotherpianist for beta'ing this chapter. As always I couldn't have done it without you.\*\*

\*\*If you'd like to beta this story or influence it in any way send me a PM or a review. I'm open to ideas. (Or you could give feedback, that is just as good)\*\*

\*\*if you celebrate Easter like myself then happy Easter to you!  
:)\*\*

\*\*i'm done, read and review please!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"I have a rendezvous with Death<br>At some disputed barricade,  
>When Spring comes back with rustling shade<br>And apple-blossoms fill the airâ€"  
>I have a rendezvous with Death When Spring brings back blue days and fair. <em>

\_It may be he shall take my hand  
>And lead me into his dark land<br>And close my eyes and quench my breathâ€"  
>It may be I shall pass him still. I have a rendezvous with Death<br>On some scarred slope of battered hill,  
>When Spring comes round again this year<br>And the first meadow-flowers appear. \_

\_God knows 'twere better to be deep Pillowed in silk and scented down,  
>Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,<br>Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,  
>Where hushed awakenings are dear...<br>But I've a rendezvous with Death At midnight in some flaming town,  
>When Spring trips north again this year,<br>And I to my pledged word am true,  
>I shall not fail that rendezvous."<em>

\_ Poem by Alan Seeger, 1916\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Sophie-G317, Aboard Marathon Class Cruiser  
<strong>\*\*\_Fire By Rank, \_ \*\*\*\*01:23 hrs, July 11 2557 UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"SPARTAN G317...how are you feeling?" The ships chief medical officer asked.

"Fine, ma'am, nothing to report." I said though I knew that she knew that wasn't the case.

"You wouldn't be here if that were the case." She said. "I know about

the hallucinations you've been having. You could get discharged for that. Honourably, of course."

"No ma'am! My place is with my team, my family." I replied instantly.

"I know. You don't need to tell me. Your team were just begging to be in here with you. If you want to get out there we need to find out why your having these hallucinations. We'll figure it out together, alright?" She replied as if talking to a child. Technically that assessment wasn't wrong, like the rest of my team I was still a minor. \_What was it? 15? Yes that's it, god. It feels like I'm 50. \_I thought.

"Now these team members. Who were they?"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Sophie-G317, Planet Onyx, 10:34 hrs, September 4 2547 UNSC Military Calendar Military Standard Time\*\*

I slowly lowered myself to the ground, my six year old form disappearing in the thick jungle that had become my home. I pulled my shaking arms close to my chests as I crawled. I heard a twig snap to my right and froze. The figure, whoever they were didn't move. I slowly edged my way over, hoping, praying it wasn't a trainer. To my happiness I found Ellie-G056 of Fireteam Cutlass. Her light brown hair was caked in mud and dirt and her face was buried in the ground as if that would protect her from the stun rounds used by our instructors.

I gave the resident Demo-Man a thumbs up as she slowly realized no one aside from me had seen her.

"Sophie? Is that you?" She quietly asked, her voice filled with fear.

"Yeah. You found anyone else?"

"No. But I think Saber, Katana and Gladius got found."

I paled. Those three teams were considered the best of us. If they had been found...

"We need to keep moving, the trainers might come for us any minute." Ellie whispered.

I nodded as we set off at a bear crawl towards our objective.

This was a simple exercise, all we had to do was ring a bell without our instructors finding and shooting us. There were 330 of us and only 150 of them. It should have been easy.

It never was.

The closest anyone had gotten had been 500 metres to the bell before the trainers had surrounded and shot them. My record was a 1000 metres away.

Along the way we found Rachel-G267 of Fireteam Cutlass, Russell-G303

and Jake-G006 of Fireteam Foil. They hadn't seen anyone else, either.

"Where do you think everyone is?" Rachel asked. Her thick Irish accent making it hard for me to understand her.

"I don't know, don't care. I'm getting to that bell and no one will stop me." Jake replied. For a team leader he didn't really do any leading. I huffed. Boys.

"You won't make it alone. We need to go together. As a team." Ellie said.

"We should try and find the rest of our teams, first. Strength in numbers right?" Russell, Foil's Sniper, said.

"I agree with Russell. Team first." I said, putting a hand on a nearby tree.

"Fine, but when the Ghosts get you don't blame me." Jake replied.

The ghosts was our nickname for our predecessors, Petty Officers Tom and Lucy. Tom only spoke a few words to us every so often, Lucy spoke none. They were the reason we could never get the bell. We hated and feared them but also admired and looked up to them. We would be them in a few years, after all.

"Let's go, quickly." Jake said. We started off again, sporadically we would hear the sound of weapons fire and shouts from the trainers as our numbers were whittled away one by one.

"How many of us do you think are left?" Rachel asked. She was a talkative person, almost always starting conversations with people. I found that odd. She was a sniper, after all.

"Not many. Less than half." I replied.

We soon came across the rest of our teams bumping our number up from five to fifteen. After twenty minutes of silent crawling through the underbrush of the thick jungle we found three more people. They identified themselves as members of Fireteam Claymore. I didn't know anything about them, not even their names. The rest of their team had been found and eliminated.

Rachel chatted with them a bit and I learned one of them was named 'Gus'.

Another thirty minutes later and we came within visual distance of the bell. It was in a small clearing with no real cover around it. The three team leaders, that is Kevin, Jake and Sara decided to make a plan, The three man team of Claymore, on the other hand, ran in.

I knew what was going to happen before it even began as three shots rang out from above and the trios only female member fell with a TTR round to her head. The other two members zigzagged in a vain attempt to dodge the well aimed bullets coming at them. They failed. 'Gus' was the last one to fall with three rounds in his back, he was 200 meters from the bell.

The rest of us stared in silent shock, contemplating whether to rush as the now 'dead' trio did or come up with a plan better than hope to not get shot.

"Was it turrets? Regular trainers? Ghosts?" Michael asked, shakily.

"Don't know. Didn't see." Cole-G107 replied.

"Well I think we should come up with some sort of plan or-!" Sara-G209 said before being cut off mid sentence as Emily was dragged, screaming and kicking into the bushes.

I saw Michael and Jake get taken down by an invisible foe before pure adrenaline fuelled me to charge the shifting spectre that was Lucy. I jumped onto her back as Kevin grabbed hold of her legs and Russell and Cole grabbed her arms and weapon respectively. In the frenzied melee we were in Cole was kicked unconscious and Kevin was shot from behind by Tom. I heard but didn't see the Beta Company S-III dispatch the rest of our fifteen man unit until I was the only one still remaining, I knew this was purely down to luck as Petty Officer Lucy fought to throw me off her back.

In a last, desperate attempt I managed to kick Lucy's right leg out from under her however the motion threw me off her back. I slid across the ground before coming to a stop in front of the now De-cloaked Petty Officer Tom. I stared up into his gold visor as he uttered a single "Failure" before knocking me unconscious.

\* \* \*

><p>I awoke with a start, my body ached and I felt as though I could die.</p>

"Finally awake, eh? Good. Lieutenant Ambrose wants to see you and your team on the triple." A voice to my right said. I realized it was the camp doctor and my fear propelled me out of his office in a speed that could rival a SPARTAN II.

I was still in my fatigues from training so I didn't need to go to the barracks, thankfully. I headed right to the commandants office.

I could see the rest of Rapier, Cutlass and Foil loitering outside. As I neared them Sara noticed me and waved. Like me they were still in their fatigues from training though Cole had a bandage wrapped around his forehead.

"You okay, Cole?" I asked, staring at the bandage.

"No, I was kicked in the head! Do I look okay to you?" The eight year old yelled.

"So in other words he's fine." Elizabeth-G330 said, softly punching him in the shoulder.

"What happened to the rest of you guys? And how long was I out?" I asked.

"We were shot, all of us. Aside from Emily and Cole here, Em was

stabbed by PO Tom and Cole, well you know." Brian-G034 said, chuckling.

"I thought so. Oh well, we were close though, right?" I said, looking towards Kevin.

"Yeah, about 300 meters. Come on we should get inside." The fifteen of us walked in to the office, sitting on the other side of an oak desk was the camp commandant, he was imposing but at the same time had a kind look to him. All of us treated him as though he was a god. I guess in a way he was. He decided if we were worthy enough to become SPARTANS, to become demons to the monsters that had taken our families from us. We would follow him to hell and back and then some.

"Teams Rapier, Cutlass and Foil, what a surprise." He said, his eyes drilling into us.

"Lieutenant Ambrose sir, allow me to explain our actions." Jake said quickly.

"Why do you think you're here, In my office?"

"Sir?"

"The cameras we placed near the objective showed you were discussing something. What was it?"

Jake drew in a breath: "We were thinking of a plan, sir. To complete the mission."

"We?"

"Yes sir, that is G-097, G-100 and myself, sir. We planned on combining our numbers."

The Lieutenant moved his eyes over all of us, as if inspecting us on parade.

"You are aware this wasn't a company themed exercise, correct?"

"Sir, yes sir however we were never told whether to view other Gamma company units as friend or foe, we merely chose the former, sir." Sara added. "We believed the chance of hostile contact near the objective was high and knew greater numbers would be needed to successfully get to the objective, sir. To add on to Gamma-006's talk of a plan, sir we decided that my team would act as bait while Rapier and Cutlass found and hopefully eliminated the hostiles in the way."

The Lieutenant said nothing, merely watching for a reaction on our end. I shifted feet nervously.

"Thank you for that explanation. You are all dismissed."

As one body we saluted and left the office. Cole and Joseph talked about how lucky we were that we weren't in trouble. I turned towards Ellie to find her smiling at Jake and Kevin who were talking excitedly with Sara on how to better plan an attack for the next

time. Michael, Russell, Emily, Rachel and Brian were chatting about how best to go about the various aspects of staying hidden and Julianne was tinkering with a datapad. Elizabeth was looking at the armoury, most likely waiting for the day when she could get her hands on an actual weapon with real ammunition and take the fight to the Covenant and Cutlass's resident CQC expert (AKA Kyle-G157) was sharpening a very long non-regulation knife he got from who knows where.

"So Kyle, any plans to actually hit the enemy next time instead of being, y'know, a bullet magnet?" I asked, trying and failing to hide my smirk. Kyle was known to boast about everything he did involving CQC however he was known for never actually getting close enough to do anything during training missions. Sure, if we sparred he'd mop the floor with everyone in the company, easy but that didn't really matter if your enemy could shoot you before you got to him. What use was a knife in a nuke fight? For example.

"Yes actually. I've even thought of 30 ways I could incapacitate or kill every single one of you with just my bare hands and this knife." He must have noticed my shocked expression and me taking a few steps back because he said: "Just kidding...29."

My only reply was my fist hitting his stomach.

\* \* \*

><p>I slowly crawled into my bed, my body ached from the training we did today, to my right and left I heard the snores and sounds of the other sleeping trainees however I heard two hushed whispers to my immediate front. I slowly smiled as I heard the same conversation that happened every night.</p>

"Hey Kevin, you still remember, right?"

"Yeah, Julianne, I still remember, I'll never forget. Do you want to hear it?"

"No. Do you want to hear yours?"

"No. Thanks anyway."

"Your welcome. Don't you ever forget it, please don't forget it."

I knew what they were talking about and I had my own way of remembering, I had it stenciled into my left boot. it was indistinguishable unless you looked carefully. I picked it up even in the pitch black and after a few seconds of searching I slowly, carefully as if touching a holy text moved my pointer finger over the letters. G-A-R-R-E-T. I whispered the word to myself, it felt alien, abnormal to have a last name. I pushed the thought out of my mind. It made me feel like a human again. To the instructors I was just a number, a faceless figure to be sent to die, having a last name felt good, it felt freeing.

I smiled one last time before falling asleep peacefully, they continued talking into the night, not teamleader and teammate but friend to friend, brother to sister.

\* \* \*

><p>"Wake up Candidate! Up!"<p>

I quickly scrambled off the warm bed, my bare feet hitting the cold ground and I recoiled from the feeling, falling to the floor as I did. I noticed I wasn't the only one as Kyle and Ellie respectively joined me on the cold ground. Around us trainers were waking the others. I saw Kevin shocked in the feet and sides while Julianne was pulled off the bed by a very big trainer and hit by his shock baton repeatedly in the stomach. "That was bloody pitiful! you all want to be SPARTANS? You have to wake up on time!"

"Yes sir, Sorry Sir!" We all yelled, though for some it came out as coughs and sputters. The shock batons zap all your will power to do anything.

"Damn right your sorry! Your all wanted on the parade square , on the triple!" Another trainer yelled. We ran as fast as our feet could carry us into the humid weather after putting on socks and our boots. I gave my left boot a quick but still affectionate pat right where the letters were.

We formed up outside, the humid air felt good to be in, I could hear the sounds of the other barracks forming p behind us. We were the first ones out.

I could see Senior Chief Petty Officer Mendez and Petty Officers tom and Lucy come out of the trainers barracks, Mendez's uniform was spotless. It looked as though he had never worn it. Tom and Lucy however wore their SPI armour, also pristine.

"Good morning Gamma company! Today we have something special for you! today in three hours you will have to move into the forest and attempt to take down Petty Officers B-292 and B-197 and the other instructors. You have those three hours to get ready in any way you see fit within reason. you will not attack other gamma company teams. Go!"

Instead of running towards the barracks or the woods as most of the company did I held position where I was. I noticed the rest of Rapier followed closely by Cutlass and Foil start to converge with me.

"Idea's?" Kevin asked plainly, looking at all of us.

"We cant just rush them." Sara said. I heard Kyle and Michael sigh and groan respectively.

"We don't have weapons, they have rifles and pistols." Jake said, crossing his arms.

"Well so do we." Julianne said, holding up her datapad. "I managed to unlock the armoury. Its just the small arms but it gives us a small surprise factor."

"Isn't that, you know against the rules?" Rachel asked, her voice wavering. We all stared at Julianne in mild surprise. So that's what you were working on. I thought.

"Yeah but that's the point. If they don't know we have them they wont

expect it." Brian said, taking Julianne's side. I saw Ellie and Elizabeth nod in affirmation.

"Lets go then, quickly before the instructors check." Emily said.

"No wait. We should have three groups. One goes and grabs the weapons, one gets us food and the final one finds a good spot to set up an ambush." Sara said. "Preferably somewhere we can wash ourselves. Why do boys stink so much?" She continued, plugging her nose.

After a good laugh and a quick solidifying of the plan we made off with our groups. We had picked a place by a stream. It was a small cave we had seen many times during our capture the flag games that would provide ample cover and we could retreat into it further if we needed to. The stream was for bathing and filling up our canteens, not necessarily in that order.

We were in charge of the weapons and by we I meant Julianne, the teams snipers and myself.

We sneakily made our way past the three instructors guarding the entrance with little trouble, they were idly chatting and one of them held a cigarette between his fingers.

Julianne made her way towards the pistols, her fingers furiously tapping away at her datapad.

"And viola! Enough guns to deal with a small insurgency." She said as the cases holding the weapons unlocked, showing us their contents in full. The three snipers made their way over to the multitude of M6C handguns on the rack while I grabbed an M6J carbine preferring the detachable stock to the reduced recoil of the M6C.

After we had loaded our arms and rucksacks which we had retrieved before coming here with handguns of almost every type we made our escape.

We still had two hours to meet up at the ambush point but we went there as soon as we left the armoury.

When we arrived everyone else was already there. We quickly handed out the weapons.

"Right, so uh we need to bathe. Right?" Russell asked quickly. I don't know why he was so embarrassed, our barracks had to shower altogether anyway so we had seen each other naked before.

"We have an hour and a half so do you want to do it by genders or by teams?" Sara asked.

All the boys gave a unanimous vote of "genders" so that's what we did. Kevin and Sara had a game of rock-paper-scissors to decide who went first. Kevin lost so the boys went first. The rest of us divvied up ourselves into groups. One group would guard while one would make the cave combat ready. Julianne, Ellie, Rachel and myself were chosen to do guard duty.

"So, Julie...What were you and Kevin talking about?" Ellie

asked.

"What do you mean? When?" She replied quickly.

"You know, every night I hear you guys talking. Its always the same conversation, about remembering something."

Julianne looked like she was about to bolt but she stood her ground. "Well you guys know I have a bad long term memory and that I don't have anything to remember my family by so I knew due to the training and them giving us numbers instead of last names I might not even remember that so I made a deal with Kevin. I remember his name and he remembers mine. Every night we would see if we each remember. And I'm not the only one, you know. Sophie stenciled hers into her left boot."

I nodded, giving my boot a pat before turning towards Ellie "Do you remember yours?"

"No. It's been two almost three years since I was called it. I forgot my own last name." She replied, panic in her voice. "I'm just a number, now." Not really knowing what to do I pulled her in for a hug, everyone else joining me after a second. We stayed there for at least five minutes, letting Ellie cry into us before the boys came back and it was our turn to bathe. We went quickly, taking ten minutes altogether.

By the time we were done I felt the most refreshed I had been In a long while, my fatigues were soaking wet courtesy of Rachel throwing me in but her clothes were just as wet due to Ellie pushing her in behind me. We all washed then got into a small game of who could dunk the most people.

I won.

We had a half hour left before the game started so the fifteen of us ate the MRE's we had 'requisitioned' from the mess hall and just made sure the ambush spot was suitable for an ambush.

We separated into our Fireteams and spread out, making sure we could see each other but at the same time being separate so we could combine fire if needed.

"Alright Rapier listen up. Cutlass is on our left and Foil is on the right. We draw the trainers in then they surround them, clear?" Kevin explained. We all nodded. "Good. Rapier 2 scout ahead, 3 and 4 set up on my left and right respectively, 5 I want you up top."

A chorus of affirmatives answered him and we went to work concealing ourselves as best we could. within minutes Julianne came running back, panting heavily.

"There's like, thirty of them coming this way! They all have SPI armour!" She yelled, jumping behind a rock, her M6G out and ready to fire.

They came out slowly, checking their rear periodically, no area was left uncovered. They had MA5K's and just like Julianne said all of them had SPI. There were five of them so far.

"On three...one...two...three!" Kevin whispered, jumping up from the bush he was hiding behind. The five man team seemed surprised but all trained their rifles on him. Before they could fire the one in front was peppered with red paint as Emily fired, the report of her weapon stopping the squad in their tracks. They dove for cover as the rest of us opened fire. I managed to hit one in the arm, the semi automatic 12.44mm rounds tearing though the humid, foggy air.

In ten seconds the entire team was dead. I quickly grabbed their rifles and handed them out to my team. Emily practically squealed with joy. We heard Cutlass and Foil engage other teams and soon we all met up, carrying MA5K's and pistols. Soon other, stronger teams of trainers attacked and we were forced back to the cave. We were fighting a losing battle and we knew it.

We had been fighting for an hour continually and were almost out of ammo. It was a miracle none of us had been hit yet.

"We need to push up! If we keep falling back we're as good as frozen!" I yelled. Grabbing my last magazine of pistol ammunition, my rifle had ran dry a half hour ago, I got into a more mobile position, ready to run if needed.

"We can't just move up! They have the entire area covered. We stay here or we-!" Ellie began to say before she was shot in the side. Before we knew it almost all of Cutlass team was frozen from well placed shots. Kyle was the only one not frozen however he had no more ammunition for either gun so he threw his rifle and pistol at the first trainer he saw, throwing the woman's aim off, he then rushed her and successfully tackled her behind a rock, shooting her with her own MA5B rifle before firing the rest of the 60 7.62mm rounds into another Fireteam. He was shot soon after.

Foil was soon separated from us and I learned after that they were picked off one by one, the trainers taking their time with each 'kill', taunting and teasing them while they did.

We planned a tactical retreat into the cave before Michael and Emily were caught in a TTR grenade, knocking them both out of the fight. We ran into the cave however I tripped and fell, hitting my head in the process and losing my weapon. I could taste blood in my mouth and my head felt like it was burning from the pain. TTR rounds exploded all around me so I knew the instructors would think I was incapacitated. I played dead. Three of them ran forwards, their rifles pointed at me.

"She's gone, move up." One of them motioned the others to move up. When they were past me I opened fire. The 12.44mm rounds catching them off guard. I took an MA5B from the leader and moved further into the cave, I was soon greeted by Kevin and Julianne, both of them were almost completely frozen.

"Orders? Rapier 1?" I asked. He turned to look at me.

"Hold this position." I nodded. We were done for.

The next few seconds went by in a blur as one of the instructors threw a flashbang grenade. Disoriented, I fired the entire clip of the rifle at what I hoped was the entrance. When my vision returned I saw the bodies of ten instructors. They were all frozen. I turned

towards Kevin and Julianne but found them frozen as well. Having no other option I ran out of the cave and into the open air of Onyx. I saw a firing line of trainers and before I knew what happened they had immobilized my arms and legs. I saw the form of Senior Chief Petty Officer Mendez standing over me, a smile on his face.

"Almost, trainee, almost."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109, On the surface of the Halo, present day<strong>

"I'm on the gun Castle Four, Chief get in the troop 'hog, Helljumpers go with her." The SPARTAN III officer said. I jumped in the driver seat, revving the engine as I heard and saw the four ODST's get in as well as the other two SPARTANS jumped in the Gauss 'hog.

"We lead, you follow." I said to the SIII. She nodded from behind the wheel

We sped off.

"Highest concentration of friendly transponders is due east." Private Harbor said from the passenger seat, holding a datapad. I turned the Warthog towards the east, jumping over hills and rocks, I heard the ODST's cheer and holler from the troop compartment. I chuckled under my helmet.

We were in a heavily forested area and visibility was extremely lacking. I analyzed the terrain as we passed, noticing a hill to our right. I classified it as a probable ambush point before focusing on the other areas, namely a small ditch and what looked like a cave.

"Hostiles right!" One of the Helljumpers yelled as my motion tracker lit up with contacts. I noticed the shots were coming from the hill on our right.

I ducked as plasma fire fire over our heads and hit the Warthogs hood.

"Where are they? I don't see them!" Private Harbor yelled.

"They're in the trees, the trees damnit!" The Lance Corporal yelled, firing wildly. "Derose I saw an LMG in the side compartment. Pick it up and use it! Mckenzie light shit up, short controlled bursts!"

I heard a weapon I was unfamiliar with begin to fire as well as the steady beat of three rounds from a Battle Rifle. Behind me I heard an M68 ALIM fire from the other warthog. The report of the weapon echoing in the close proximity of the trees.

I thought we were in the clear when the fire began to slack when I saw, to late, a fuel rod gun wielded by a particularly gutsy Elite Major fire from atop a rock.

I swerved and the five green globs missed however I saw that the second 'hog wouldn't be so lucky.

The first three sailed past the Warthog, the Lieutenant barely managing to dodge them however the last two impacted the hog's front right tire, melting it and causing the already unstable Warthog to flip end over end, throwing the Lieutenant out but pinning the Warrant Officer. I stopped driving, giving the Marines orders to form a perimeter while at the same time jumping out of my own 'hog and jogging over to the now disabled one, my rifle already in hand as the Marines dispatched the remaining Covenant.

The Lieutenant was picking himself up off the ground as I jogged past. I found the other SIII pinned between the ground and the drivers seat. I could see blood all over her chest and arms. Her visor was cracked and a large piece of former warthog was imbedded in her stomach.

I sighed. The best course of action would be to leave the crippled SPARTAN here. She would only slow us down and moblity was a factor we needed, not to mention the waste of medical supplies. I only had one can of Biofoam on my person and that was for me only. Not that I'd ever need it but still...it. Was. Mine.

"Ma'am? What's your status?" I asked. She titled her head towards me.

"I have a piece of rebar in my stomach and am currently pinned under a warthog. What do you think, Chief?" She asked. I cocked my head to the side, suprised she was awake let alone alive.

"Can you get me out of here?" She asked. I nodded, lifting the Light Armoured Vehicle with ease befor roughly pulling the SIII out. I propped her against the carcass of the former Warthog and looked her over before turning towards the Lance Corporal and his Marines.

"Any of your men have stun rounds on them?" I asked. He nodded, jogging over and handing me his pistol.

"It's all TTR, Chief. Why?"

"Because—" I quickly and efficiently ripped the rebar out of the Warrant Officer's stomach, oblivious to her cries of pain. "-We can't seal her up here, to open, so a stun round should stop any blood from coming out."

"Oh." He replied as I shot the EVA armoured SIII in the chest with three rounds.

"Help me get her onto the other 'hog until we can find some place to bunker down and call for help." I said as the Lieutenant ran over.

"What happend here?" He asked, concern evident in his voice. "Castle Four?"

All he received from her was a grunt of pain so I took up the mantle of explanation.

"She's had a piece of rebar removed from her chest, Sir. She won't be in the best of moods now."

"Hey guys! Uh there's something wrong here!" Private Harbor yelled,

running over with her datapad in hand.

"What?" I asked. She pointed to her Datapad.

"Well these show the position of all UNSC transponders on planet, whether your alive or dead. The ones we were going towards have started to move towards us and they are moving fast."

"Maybe they know we're coming to help?" The Lieutenant said, coming up behind me.

"No sir I don't think so. Look here, see the green ones here?" Harbor said pointing at two places on the map. "Those are us and base camp respectively but look at the mass of them coming towards us."

I looked and didn't like what I saw. For one it was completely impossible and two made me realize how much blind faith we put on this operation.

"They're neither sir, not alive and not dead." Harbor whispered.

"Lance Corporal you were on a Halo before, right?" I asked quickly.

"Yeah, why."

"What did you fight? Covenant, Innies?"

"Covvies and little drone things and flood...oh shit!" He said, catching on. "McKenzie, Derose! Get behind that over turned Warthog! Harbor join them! Che-"

A blood curling scream filled the air.

"Fuck! How'd they get so goddamn close?" McKenzie yelled, propping her Battle Rifle on the Warthog.

"Everyone behind the 'hog, now!" Derose yelled.

"How many transponders are coming?" I asked the young Australian Private.

"Fifty, ma'am."

"Fifty? That's it?" I heard myself whisper. You can take them. You work better alone anyway. Let these people be bait. You need to test the enemies' capabilities.

"That's only how many are former UNSC. There's not telling how many others are there."

We waited, shoring up our defenses as the horde, approached. A thick fog settled over the area as I heard Private Harbor call out the flood's distance. "800 metres!"

I have a rendezvous with Death

I checked my ammo for my battle rifle. "700 metres!"

\_At some disputed barricade \_

The blue lighted ammo counter showed 36 rounds. "600 metres!"

\_It maybe he shall take my hand \_

I quickly calibrated the scope, correcting for windage and elevation. "500 metres!"

\_And lead me into his dark land\_

I then checked my M7 SMG, finding 48 rounds in the clip. "400 metres!"

\_And close my eyes and quench my breath\_

I did a quick suit diagnostic, finding nothing wrong. "300 metres!"

\_I have a rendezvous with Death\_

I sighted down range as the horde came ever closer. "200 metres!"

\_And I to my pledged word am true,\_

The Hulking figure of a combat form came barreling out of the fog. "100 metres!"

\_I shall not fail that rendezvous.\_

## 10. Chapter 10: New people, new gear!

\*\*Hey guys I'm back! \*\*

\*\*So I'd like to thank you all for reading this far and hope you enjoy this next chapter. Show your appreciation with a review! It allows me to see if people actually read and enjoy this story!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"Many of you are wondering why we allied with the Elites. Many of them are wondering the same. I will say this now: <em>

\_We will cut our ties with them as soon as hostilities with the Covenant have diminished. When the loyalist Covenant are dead our alliance with the Elites ends!"\_

\_Admiral Lord Hood, Speaking about humanities alliance with the Elites.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>CSO class Supercarrier <strong>\*\*\_Unrelenting Truth, \*\*\*\*05:00 hrs, July 11 2557/ UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

Fleetmaster Ltho' Rodomee wasn't sure how he was to proceed. His ships, numbering at last count as three CDV class corvettes and two

CCS class battlecruisers had decimated a small force of reclaimers in their odd, triangular ships before another ship appeared.

This was a ship he was familiar with, one he knew he could kill however much to the displeasure of his crew he stayed his hand, watching as this one ship beat four of their fellow reclaimers. It confused the aging Fleetmaster greatly however he ordered the group forwards and the Fleetmaster watched with despair as the new ship disappeared in a slipstream portal, appearing again above the holy ring, depositing drop pods and other ground forces to the surface.

That was six human hours ago. The ship had again run and he was about to give chase when he was stopped by a power far greater than him.

A minor Prophet. The Prophet of Trinity, to be precise. So he waited.

And waited.

And waited some more.

Now he was here, in the Prophets holy chambers, waiting for an audience. The two Brute honor guards stood stock still, yet the Fleetmaster could sense their dislike of him. He couldn't care less. This was his fleet, the Brutes would abide by his rules. Honor guards or not.

The fleetmaster's thoughts briefly turned towards the Humans. He found it funny that they had been allies not a decade before and yet were fighting each other again. The Fleetmaster could hardly blame the humans.

No the Arbiter held the blame. He thought so highly of humans. He believed they could have peace, have an alliance. They did, for a time but it wasn't a true alliance. No it was one born out of desperation and a need for survival.

Even the Arbiters most trusted ally, the Spartan 117 wasn't his friend as he thought, nor his confidante. The blind fool just didn't see it. That demon would have killed him a thousand times over under any other circumstance. It would have killed all of the Covenant if given the chance. The Fleetmaster pledged that no demon would ever thwart the journey again.

Which was why, when he received word that a team of demons had boarded from one of the hangers he canceled his meeting with the Prophet and put the ship on alert.

He had demons to kill.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, Aboard CSO Supercarrier, 05:25 hrs, July 11 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"...and got it." Julianne said, unlocking the hanger door. We moved through in a loose V formation. The purple walls and floors felt familiar and...homey?

\_You really should try and control your emotions, Petty Officer. And yes that last was mine. sorry about that.\_

Oh...right. The A.I, Sabrina. The ONI Spook had had her A.I paired with me for this op...it was unsettling to say the least. Her cool presence was odd and I felt extremely light headed.

"Noted. How far?" I asked, barely getting out of sight of a roving band of Jackals.

"Three kilometers to go until you reach the first junction." She said out loud, or rather over the team comm frequency.

"What's our target again?" Michael asked as he snapped the neck of a lone Grunt.

"Main reactor." Julianne said, her tone of voice suggesting she was bored as she got to work unlocking another door.

We stepped out into what looked like a giant forest of sorts. Tall, lean trees greeted us and unfamiliar flora lined the walls. In the distance I could see a large door marked with a NAV point.

"That leads to the main reactor, there are doors to your left and right that lead to the bridge and officers quarters respectively.

"Why is this ship so big?" Michael huffed before turning to me. "You think their compensating for something?" We both chuckled before Emily, walking past us elbowed Michael in the ribs. Sophie brought up the rear.

I was hesitant to bring the team's medic but the medical officer cleared her for duty. She had been given meds that should cancel out the hallucinations. I hoped they cancelled out the hallucinations.

We went down into the forest, always watching our backs and checking our sensors. We couldn't be to careful as we had no support from the UNSC \_Fire By Rank \_or the teams on the Halo. We were alone.

I wasn't sure why there were almost no hostiles. A ship this big had to have thousands of troops and workers. So where were they?

\_We have three hawks on overwatch, your twelve, Rapier 2.\_ Emily said from behind me. Julianne went low, her form going stock still as her armour blended into the surroundings. \_ "Permission to engage, Rapier Lead?"

I nodded once and Emily sent a suppressed burst from her battle rifle at the trio of Jackals. Each shot from her three round burst impacted a head and each head, body attached, tumbled to the ground. We moved forward.

"Hostiles rear!" Sophie yelled. "Brutes!" I turned to face the hulking forms and saw Sophie fire a burst point blank only to get swatted aside.

"Bravo Kilo is beserk!" Emily yelled. "Run!" So we did. I saw Sophie get up and run with us, she was limping but seemed otherwise

unharmed.

"They're gaining!" Michael yelled, firing a sustained burst. The Brutes just shrugged it off and kept coming. There was a small intersection of forest that would be suitable for an ambush and we had enough of a gain on the Bravo Kilos that we could hide.

I gave a series of hand motions quickly and my team hid themselves in the bushes and behind trees. With our Photo-reactive panals active alongside the active camo we were nigh invisible.

When the Brutes came rushing in followed by a rather large group of Grunts I reevaluated our options.

The grunts would be the easiest to deal with. A grenade in the middle of their group would scatter and frighten them. The Brutes however...

When a team of SPARTAN II's had snuck into a Covenant space station a single Brute had killed one of the team and very nearly killed the other in one on one hand to hand combat. The moral of the story, you ask?

Don't ever fight alone.

I quickly issued orders to my team before Sabrina, who had been remarkably quiet spoke.

"Be advised, Petty Officer, that those Brutes are wearing Honor guard armour."

I knew what armour they were wearing and so asked rather rudely.  
"And?"

"Just be careful. There's two of us in here you know."

"Noted." I said. I didn't need a computer program to tell me how to command my team. "Pick your targets. Rapier 3 lob a pineapple into the middle of the Grunt formation. Everyone else focus fire on the Apes. Don't get separated and don't engage them in CQC...execute."

I saw Michael pull the pin on an M67-HE and throw it. The Grunts, either not noticing or not reacting quick enough were completely obliterated by the subsequent explosion. The Brutes were a different story.

I fired at the closest one, noticing Michael quickly assisting me while everyone else took on the task of dispatching the farther one. To my surprise the five rounds fired from my M395 DMR bounced off the helmet of the brute and the fire from Michaels MA5B just made it mad. It charged us.

At the last moment I rolled out of the way, Michael sidestepped and bashed the Brute in the back. If Michael had preformed that strike on anything else it's spine would have snapped in two. The Brute merely grunted and backhanded Michael across the head, sending his limp form flying into a container.

The Brute changed targets, charging Emily from the side. I gave a rushed warning her before quickly firing off another burst, aimed at

the brutes legs to destabilize it. I succeeded, the brute landing mere centimetres from Emily.

Emily, who was in the middle of warding off the other Brute along with Sophie and Julianne noticed the Brute, fired another burst at her original target while at the same time she pulled out her knife and stabbed it into the Brutes arm.

The blade, 10cm of titanium, didn't pierce the Brutes skin as she had hoped but bent at an unusable angle. Emily managed a small "Fuck." Before the Brute pulled at her legs, pulling her to the ground and punching her in the gut repeatedly.

I sighed knowing I'd have to switch to my pistol or go into CQC.

I placed my rifle on my back and pulled the M6H from its holster. I ran over, ripping the Brutes helmet from its head before firing a single round into its thick skull. Or atleast that was what I would have done.

The Ape noticed me and stuck it's large arm out, at my speed I didn't realize before it was to late and the Brute had its hand around my neck. I gasped for breath that would never come as I fumbled for its helmet. I finally managed to rip it off and shakily pointed my sidearm at its head. I pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened. Lady Luck hates me today.

I realized to my dismay that the safety was still on and after quickly flipping it off fired a single round.

The High Explosive Armour Piercing round went into the skull of the Brute and impacted the brain then as cleanly as possible exploded.

I was showered with gore however I had other things to worry about. I turned towards the other Brute to find Julianne and Sophie triumphantly standing atop it, beating it with their rifles. The Brute had a multitude of holes in its body and I chuckled. Julianne had flexed her not so muscular arms and the image wouldn't have looked out of place in one of the many museums on Earth of conquering heroes of the planets many brutal wars.

I was interrupted by a coughing sound from behind and below me however. I turned to find Emily had been pinned under the Brutes dead carcass.

"Get this thing off of me!" After I quickly pulled her out with a little help from Julianne she ripped her helmet off and threw up her past three meals onto the purple deck.

"What happened to you?" Julianne asked, chuckling.

"I just had a face full of it's junk all over my helmet!" She yelled. Julianne's chuckles became full blown laughter.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>CSO class Supercarrier <strong>\*\*\_Unrelenting Truth,  
\_\*\*\*\*05:30 hrs, July 11 2557/ UNSC Military Calendar/Military  
Standard Time\*\*

To say Fleetmaster Rodomee was fuming would be an understatement. He was about ready to strangle one of the many bridge officers for incompetence.

"Fleetmaster we've lost contact with the demons pursuers! there's no response!" A rather gutsy Elite Major yelled.

"Get cameras on them! I want them found! Double the guard for the Prophet!"

"I have a recording from the main foyer. pursuers are all dead. What should we do?"

"What are their numbers?" The Fleetmaster asked.

"Five, Fleetmaster. One is incapacitated."

"Box them in. Don't let them leave that intersection! Get shock teams ready." The Fleetmaster clicked his mandibles together and smiled.  
"And get our prisoners ready for a show."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, Aboard CSO Supercarrier, 05:30 hrs, July 11 2557UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"Rapier 4 how is he?" I asked Sophie as she crouched beside Michael, waving a medical scanner over his limp body.

She turned to look at me, my helmet reflecting in her own gold visor.  
"He's fine. a little head trauma but he should be okay."

"And how are you? You holding up?" I asked.

She nodded. "Yeah. No hallucinations to report." She used her rifle to help stand up, giving Michael a soft kick to wake him as she did.

\_ "2, 5 how's our exit looking?" \_ I asked.

\_ "Green on my end." \_ Julianne said over comms. I received a single green acknowledgement light from Emily.

"Good. Sabrina any updates from their system?"

\_ "They're boxing you in but not charging...odd. I don- " \_

"Hear me Demons and tremble!" A voice said over the ships intercom as a screen to our right came to life, showing the Split-Lip in all his glory. "I am Fleetmaster Ltho' Rodomee of the fleet of \_Unyielding Servitude. \_Lay down your arms and your comrades may yet live." The image then changed to show six SPARTANS. Five wore an outdated version of SPI while the sixth wore a Mark V variant. They had their hands bound and were on their knees.

"What is this?" Michael whispered. "Who are they?"

"Tighten up Rapier, Defensive position Omega." I said. My team formed a circle, our weapons pointing outwards in all directions.

The intercom blared to life again. "I will kill one of your comrades every 30 seconds until you surrender." The Elite pulled out an energy dagger, igniting it and stepping behind one of the SPI armoured hostages. The Elite slowly and methodically tracing along the armour, the occupant within fighting back a scream. I tore my eyes from the screen as the dagger plunged into the helmet, killing the person inside.

\_ "They are currently on the bridge. If you run I could stall him." \_Sabrina said over the team comms.

"Good. Rapier lets move!" I yelled. "Stay together and check your sensors. We need to be quick!"

I received a four green acknowledgment lights in response as we started running.

As we ran we killed around twenty hostiles of various species and rank. Mostly Grunts and Jackals but a few Elites here and there. No Brutes, thankfully.

We made record time to the bridge, taking only a minute. Even so I knew a minute was far to long. In that time the Elite could have killed them all.

I braced at the doors as Michael set a breaching charge. When the charge detonated we ran in, our IFF tags showing who not to shoot. I quickly took down an Elite officer and a trio of Grunts and my team dealt with the other hostiles.

As one we approached the Fleetmaster, he had taken two of the four remaining SPARTANS as shields.

I held up my fist and my team held their fire.

"Wise move, Demon. Wis—" One of the Fleetmasters hostages used their bound arms as a large fist and smashed them repeatedly into the Elite's stomach. Finding the opening we were looking for my team fired.

The Elites shields crumbled from the withering torrent of fire and dissipated, allowing Emily to fire a three round burst into the Fleetmaster's skull.

I ran over to the two former hostages, quickly finding out how to deactivate the cuffs binding their arms.

"Thanks, SPARTAN. I thought we were done for." One of them, a female, said quietly. "I'm Brittany, that's Felix." Brittany said, pointing towards the other former meat shield. "Over there are Hansu, Asher, Elizabeth and Ralph. Or at least it was Ralph."

I nodded solemnly. Sophie was checking the others wounds while Emily and Michael secured the immediate area. Sophie turned to me.

"He's dead, sir."

"Can you fight?" I asked Brittany. She nodded, whatever sadness she had for her comrade could wait. I handed her my pistol.

"Who's in charge here?" Another voice, the one Brittany said was Asher, asked.

I went over to her. "Petty Officer 1st Class Kevin-G097, squad leader of Fireteam Rapier, SPARTAN III Gamma company. I assume your in command of them?" I asked, broadly gesturing towards the other SPARTANS.

"What's left of my team, yes." She said.

I nodded, emotionless behind my visor. "I'm sorry for your loss."

"Thanks." She sighed heavily. "Do you have a plan to get out?"

"We entered with EVA packs. This was a demo op, not a rescue mission. We didn't know about you until Split-Jaw over there told us. I could possibly get a Pelican to go and wait a while out of range of the enemy guns but..."

"If our suits are breached we can't leave." Asher replied, catching on.

"Yes."

"If you guys are here to blow the reactor you could just blow the bridge. The power of the blast should mess this ship up pretty good." A voice cut in.

"Felix!" Another SPARTAN muttered.

"What? It's true!"

"Castle team. Quiet, please." Asher said. "Felix work with Rapiers engineer. Hansu see if you can get anything of value from the ships databanks. Elizabeth help secure the area. Brittany gather up some weapons."

"Any of your team have a suit breach?" I asked her.

She shook her head. "None that I know of. Castle do any of you have suit punctures?"

A chorus of "Negative" answered her.

"Hey we got Brutes charging us! Head up!" Julianne said, running into the room, Michael only steps behind her.

"Castl-" Asher started but was stopped by Michael.

He held up his hand, all fingers showing before lowering them one by one. When the had all gone down a loud boom was heard as well as several pitched wails.

"Bravo Kilo's down, sir." Michael said. "We should move though. I'll set the rest of my charges then we can book it."

"Agreed. Rapier provide cover around Castle." I replied. "Rapier 5, Rapier 4 you have our six, Castle disperse yourselves where you think

you can be useful but don't get cocky. 2, 3 on me."

Michael and Julianne ran over, Michael set then configured his charges.

"What do you need boss?" Julianne asked, her posture showing she was rather restless.

"I want you two up front. Kill anything in your way and don't stop for anything. Our only chance we have to get out of her is if we're mobile. Clear?"

They nodded.

"We're ready." Asher said from behind me. I could hear the pain in her voice, I could see it in Castle's actions as a whole. They had lost a friend, a comrade, a brother. I knew the pain would hit Asher the most, as the leader she had failed her most basic but most important duty.

I knew what she was going through.

Which is why I remained completely emotionless as I replied. "Good. Lets move."

\_ "They have put the ship on high alert. EVA isn't an option anymore." \_ Sabrina said over the comms. I hadn't heard her in a few minutes and almost forgot she was here.

"Who was that?" Hansu asked.

"ONI A.I. I trust her." I said.

Julianne and Michael were in front with Hansu and Elizabeth behind them. Then came Myself and Asher followed by Brittany and Felix. Emily and Sophie brought up the rear.

\_ "We need a new exit strategy." \_ Emily said as we started to head out.

\_ "Rapier 3 you disabled the shields, right?" \_ I asked.

\_ "Yeah, why?" \_

\_ "Because I have our exit." \_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Flight Officer Lilly 'Pilot' Booke, aboard Pelican Delta-206 "Poltergeist" <strong>

\_ ...One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three- \_

"Hey boss."

\_ -One thousand four, one thousand five- \_

"Boss."

- \_ One thousand six, one thousand seven- \_

"For fucks sake!" I heard the sound of something being thrown and expertly caught the rather large ball of gum wrappers in my left hand, the other continued my game of paddleball.

"What?" I asked, chucking the gum wrappers into a small garbage can beside me.

"Why are we just sitting here? I want some action!" Haverson, my replacement co-pilot said. He was a native of Paris IV and had joined the Navy for glory and medals.

I sighed. Haverson didn't realize yet that the 'action-packed' job of a Pelican pilot consisted of two things:

1. Drop Marines and their assorted crap at a hot LZ then bug out and
2. Pick up Marines and their assorted crap at an even hotter LZ when they inevitably retreat.

"If you wanted action you should have joined the Marines." I replied, my voice even.

"You know I hate mud and dirt and all that stuff. Plus they walk too much!"

"Maybe you just don't walk enough." A third voice belonging to my Crew Chief, Sweets, said. Sweets was the stereotypical version of the big black man that looked as though he could rip you in two but was a caring, gentle giant in reality.

"Oh hah hah Sweets, very funny. You shoulda' been a comedian." Haverson snapped before muttering under his breath "smart-ass."

"No he's right man. Look at me, I'm a Marine. You see me panting after walking everywhere?" The fourth and final voice of my crew, Lance Corporal Hernendez said from behind the M247H machine gun. As the back ramp was closed and we were in zero gee she more or less floated behind it.

She was Latino though she looked as pale as a polar bear. She was a career marine from San Fransisco who had joined up at sixteen to get away from the gangs and thugs two years before Earth had been attacked and had fought at Tribute and Earth and had joined my crew at Reach when we retreated.

"Fuck you Hernendez. You don't count."

"No? You wanna eat those words?" She replied.

"Ha like you'd do anything! Your such a sissy..."

I tuned them out and went back to focusing on my game.

\_One thousand forty four, one thousand forty five, one thousand forty six...\_

\_ "Pelican Delta 206 this is Rapier One, come in." \_I keyed the comm and replied quickly.

\_ "This is Poltergiest we copy. What do you need Rapier?" \_

\_ "Change of plans. We need you to come into the rear hanger of the Supercarrier. How copy?" \_

I heard Sweets spew out his gum and Haverson stutter something I didn't hear while Hernendez chambered a round in the machine gun and gave me a thumbs up.

I loved my crew.

\_ "Copy all Sierra. Give us a tick." \_ I replied before turning to face my crew in the bloodtray. "Haverson get the 40mm ready. Sweets get us ready for wounded. I don't doubt the SPARTANS are badass but you can't be too careful. Hernendez as soon as the ramp drops start shooting."

I received a nod from Sweets and another thumbs up from Hernendez while Haverson said nothing as he joined me in the cockpit.

"Let's do this." I muttered, placing my paddleball into my pants pocket before starting the engine. My bird shooting across space.

"How are we doing? Haverson. Remember your my guide." I said.

"Yeah. Uh we're fine so far."

I chuckled. "I mean when we get to the giant ass ship. Then your my guide."

"If you want me to fly-"

"You? Touch my baby? No. When you get your own bird you can fly her however long you want."

"Just saying if I'm guiding you then why are you even here? Shouldn't I be flying myself?"

I sighed for the umpteenth time that day as I tried to come up with a good response before settling on. "Haverson shut the fuck up. I'm busy."

I had attempted landings in enemy ships before. They were quite easy to be honest however the reason they were so easy was because there were capital ships to cover me and Longswords escorting. I had none of those things.

This mission was suicidal and insane but that's why I joined the Navy.

"Hey what about the Covvie Point Defense Guns?" Hernendez asked.

Oh shit. I forgot the PDG's!

I quickly keyed the Comm and attempted to radio the SPARTAN team.

\_ "Spartan you deactivated the enemy's PDG's, right?" \_

\_ "Negative, didn't have time." \_He replied in a calm, almost nonchalant voice.

I let out a slew of curses and told the Spartan we'd probably die.

\_ "Sorry. I'll buy you a drink if we get back." \_

\_ "Do you guys even drink?" \_I asked.

\_ "...No." \_

I once again let out a sigh before telling them we would be there in three minutes and said we'd wait for five but no longer.

At the two minute mark I saw the group of enemy ships, or more accurately the 29km beast and its escorts.

It was a beautiful sight. The stars had taken on an ethereal green glow and the enemy ships looked like calm places of tranquility and, not the genocide dealing warships they actually were.

The enemy didn't fire at all as we approached. Something I found odd and at the same time scared me more than anything else.

Whoever said humans were the most afraid of the unknown was a fucking genius.

"Hey why aren't they shooting?" Haverson asked.

The enemy chose that moment to open fire on us. Only the Supercarrier fired but it was still thousands of lasers and plasma weapons.

I ducked and weaved my Pelican through the torrent of fire as my crew let out every curse known to man.

"Everyone shut the hell up! I'm flying here!"

As the hanger came into view I prayed the Spartan team was already there. Thankfully they were along with six others. One of them was on the ground, unmoving.

I landed the Pelican as Haverson opened up with the 40mm and Hernendez opened fire with the M247H as the Spartan team ran towards us, firing as they ran.

I saw that the six new people had scavenged Covenant weaponry in their hands and two of them were carrying the unmoving Spartan.

"Get in, come on!" Sweets yelled, firing his pistol at the assorted hostiles in the hanger.

"Eat shit you Covvie fuckers! Yeah!" Hernendez, caught up in the heat of the moment, yelled as she decapitated a trio of grunts and two Elites.

When all the SPARTANS were inside and secure I gunned the engine, propelling my Pelican out of the hanger and into space.

I heard a pair of feet come up behind me and realized it was the Spartan team leader.

"Nice timing, pilot. Can you fly us out of here?" He asked.

Out of a giant 29km warship who's only target is us? Sure, why not!\_

"Yeah, buckle up. It'll be a bumpy ride!" I replied, pushing my thoughts aside.

We soared through space, dodging pulse lasers and plasma rounds. All the while from the back I could hear a heated discussion occurring between the original Spartan team and the new guys.

I sighed as I dodged another torpedo before focusing on the task at hand.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, aboard Pelican Delta 206<strong>

I made my way back to the troop bay, finding one of the former prisoners kneeling over the body, saying last rites. Or at least I think that was what they were doing though I couldn't be sure. The Mark V armoured SPARTAN, for that's what they had to be, was sitting in the seat closest to the door, her helmet off, cradled in her hands.

"Ma'am?" Sophie asked, standing beside her. "I need to scan you for injuries, sorry, its procedure."

The Spartan merely nodded, allowing Sophie to scan her.

"Physically fine, a little malnourished but that's to be expected. The rest of your team is the same." She paused uncertain of what to say to the silent Spartan. "For what its worth I'm sorry about your friend." she added quietly.

The Spartan standing by the door shot up and Sophie flinched backwards in alarm. He took off his helmet and flicked it to the ground with marked lack of care.

"You think sorry is enough?" he suddenly shouted, his voice cracking making the words that more raw. "He's dead! Oh my gosh...Ralph's dead and you lot did nothing!" He said directing his anguish towards my teammate.

Sophie was clearly taken aback by his outburst and I felt a flicker of anger against this other Spartan. I sympathized but taking it out on another was going to far and that was my teammate. She didn't deserve his anger.

Castle Eight caught my eye and imperceptibly shook her head.

"We couldn't do anything." Sophie replied trying to calm him down. "Really...we know...I know what you're going through, more than anyone else-"

"Liar!" he spat. "How could you know? How could you feel what I

feel?" He cried out, becoming lucid. I saw him lunge at Sophie only to be punched mid-stride by Julianne.

"We know because ten of our team members died in front of us while we watched. We saw our family killed in front of us. I held my best friend in my arms while he bled out in some godforsaken tunnel on a planet nobody cared about! Don't think you're the only one here who's felt loss, you son of a bitch because that is as far from the truth as possible!" She said, panting in-between breaths.

"Hey what you punching him for?!" an angry Castle Three said standing up.

"Sit down now Spartan." I said firmly.

"And you, lock it down, Felix! You're not helping anyone." Asher added, looking up from her helmet in her hands.

"Well excuse me miss Noble." he said bitterly. "When was the last time you cared about any of us dying?"

A hail of angry retorts immediately shot up from everyone assembled.

"Shut up!" Asher roared and silencing the Pelican in an instant. Her blotched face suddenly became livid as she stood up walked directly over to Felix staring him down.

"Explain yourself Spartan!" She yelled.

"Making an observation Ma'am!" He growled angrily.

"You have no right to pass judgment Felix." she growled angrily. "Do not forget that I was there when Graciella and Isabel were killed by the Field Marshal. I was there in that bunker with you when New Alexandria was glassed. I was there when every single member of Noble Team fell to save a freaking rock that was already dead from the moment the Covenant showed up! I was there on Tylos with you and I were burned to death in a vain effort to stop the Covenant war machine. I was there for EVERY. Single. Death!"

Felix looked to utter a reply when Asher suddenly swore and both teams flinched visibly as she slammed her fist against the wall and whispered something unheard by the others and her voice cracked and wavered as she let emotion run its course.

"He gave his life in the service of humanity. None of us deserve a death like his but he took it like a man. A real man, he looked death and the eye and he said 'take me with you.' Look at us! We are fighting when we should be supporting each other."

Nobody spoke, nobody dared to.

"What would William think if he saw you guys now?"

She sat down and buried her head in her lap. Felix whispered an apology to Sophie though it didn't seem entirely sincere and the bay became absolutely silent once more.

I looked away, towards the other two members of my team. Michael was

in the midst of watching the other Castle members while Emily was slowly and quietly loading stun rounds into her sidearm incase of another physical outburst.

The marine who had been manning the turret when the Pelican picked us up sighed before smiling. "You guys are gonna blow that Supercarrier, right?" She asked.

Michael nodded, pulling out the detonator for his explosives. There was no countdown, no warning except when the ship exploded.

Even though we were behind a closed Pelican door and my visor was darkened to the maximum i still shielded my eyes as the largest explosion I'd never hear occurred.

"Boom." Michael said quietly.

I nodded before heading back into the cockpit.

"Where are we headed, pilot?" I asked as the veteran Flight Officer turned the Pelican towards the Marathon Crusier in the distance.

"Re-arm for you and re-fuel for us. Then I don't know. Wherever we're needed I suppose."

"What's it like groundside?" I asked, watching as we past the gigantic ring world.

"Chaotic. We've got reports of flood, Covvies and Imps tearing the shit outta' eachother with our guys caught in the middle."

"What about the Spartan team already groundside?"

"Last I heard was they were being overwhelmed by flood though I have faith they'll pull through."

I nodded, digesting the information and compartmentalizing it. A four way firefight wasn't something I wanted to get into.

The pilot flicked some switches and dials before muttering something incoherent.

"Huh. Well Sierra looks like you and your team are wanted on an ONI Prowler. I didn't even know there was a Prowler here!" The Co-pilot said.

"Haverson shut up!" The pilot said before facing me. "He's right though. ONI wants you now."

"What about the others in the bay. The former prisoners?"

"The spooks want your team and your team only. I don't know about the others but I assume they'll come back with us to the \_Fire By Rank.\_"

I headed back into the troop at once again to brief my team. They gave nods of affirmation but were otherwise silent.

I also noticed the split.

As if a line had been drawn down the middle of the Pelican Rapier stayed to one side while Castle stayed on the other, neither side interacting with the other.

I sat next to Julianne and motioned for her to set up a private comm channel.

\_ "Boss." \_She said.

\_ "That was stupid, you know." \_I said. "\_ "You drove a wedge through both teams." \_

\_ "I had to. You know that, right? He had no right to say what he did." \_

\_ "And you did?" \_

\_ "That's not the point. He was out of line." \_

\_ "You punched him in the stomach." \_

\_ "Actually it was the left rib cage." \_

\_ "Still." \_I said firmly.

\_ "You wanted to do something, I know you did." \_

\_ "I'm not commenting." \_I said before changing the subject. "\_ "What do you think ONI wants us for?" \_

\_ "The spooks? Probably a debrief or something." \_

\_ "Yeah." \_

\* \* \*

><p>I had expected a debrief, everyone of us did. What I didn't expect was five suits of armour lined up on a wall along with weapons I hadn't seen before.<p>

The suits of armour were incredibly sleek and were all matte black in colour with a secondary colour of matte white. There was no identifiable visor visible on the helmet save for two cyan coloured circles, one on top of the other separated by the armour itself. Like the rest of the armour the helmet had a sleekness to it I hadn't seen before. It also looked alien but also human at the same time.

An ONI technician motioned us over.

"Fireteam Rapier?" We nodded. "Good. Let me introduce you to your new armour. The MJOLNIR GEN2 Pioneer. optimized for dealing with harsh terrain. It's not new, not particularly but with the modifications given to it it's something else!"

"Something else?" I asked.

"It has special alloys and systems to completely eliminate heat and IR readings and to deal with unknown viruses and pathogens better than others like HAZOP, for example. Not to mention the shielding

system and modified barrier generators." The techie replied.

I could hear my team salivating at the mouth when they heard that, still I was skeptical.

"Modified how?" I asked. "And what barriers?"

"The shield is longer lasting. I'm sure your aware of the relatively short amount of damage it can take."

"10-15 seconds exactly when confronted with an MA5C." Julianne said.

The techie nodded. "Yeah. For this armour we've used modified generators mechanisms so the shields can take a tank round. Though you'll still feel the impact and after that round it's by shields." He paused. "And the barriers? Well you know how the Jackels have those gauntlets for shields? Well we've managed to install larger ones onto the hands. As well as beefing them up with tech recovered from Trevelyan. When you get into the armour I'll demonstrate."

Okay, now that was nice.

"We'll get you all suited up then we can move onto the weapons and barriers. Please step to the armour corresponding with your service number."

We did and upon undressing and putting on newer black body suits soon found ourselves on the same apparatus used to suit up SPARTAN IV's on the newer ships.

When I had the helmet on a flurry of icons appeared but I found the Interface was remarkably similar to our SPI armour. With a quick flurry of eye motions I found that I could see again. I heard Emily ask why there was no visor on the inside when there was on the outside and the techie replied that the helmet used a surplus of external cameras and sensors on those visor pieces as well as others on the sides to show us what was happening around us at all times. The helmet possessed a 10x zoom feature as well. The armour felt a little heavier than I was used to but I quickly got used to it as did my team.

Soon we were just as good if not better than before and the ONI tech excitedly moved onto the barriers.

"Who wants to try first?" The tech asked. We all stepped forwards. The man chuckled. "Team leader step up!"

I did and saw my team had surrounded me.

"Alright, now to do this position your left arm as though you were using a shield." I did this. "Good, now place your right hand palm up on the middle of your bent arm and think of a barrier."

I did as I was asked and soon saw a pulsating rectangular barrier of blue light in front of me.

The tech continued talking. "We've tested this barrier with a civilian pistol up to the main gun on a Scorpion MBT, nothing could

penatratre it. There is a few drawbacks though. For starters you can't move as freely and you won't be able to fire a weapon of any kind. It also only protects where the barrier itself is shown. Watch your backs. Oh and there's a time limit, as you can probably see in your HUD. I nodded as I noticed the circular image of the barrier drain inside my helmet. I also saw the barrier was turning red.

I deactivated the barrier as my team took turns making their own. When we finished the tech moved over to the weapons.

We crowded around him as he pulled one of the five M395 DMRs off the wall.

"This is a modified M395. The barrel contains internal flash and sound suppressors and the magazine capacity has been increased from 14 to 35 rounds. The default ammo type is a Armour Piercing Fin Stabilized High Explosive round cambered in 7.62x51mm. The scope has a number of functions from target identification to a sniper like zoom. It also functions as a laser sight as I doubt you'll need the scope."

From behind me I saw Emily mutter approvingly as the young techie continued. "As you can see we've also installed vertical fore-grips to each weapon though under barrel attachments such as grenade launchers and shotguns can be utilized as well."

I heard Michael give a low shout of thanks to the man, who returned the gesture by heading over to the other weapon displayed, unlike the DMRs there was only three of these pistol shaped weapons.

It was shaped like an M6C though near the end of the barrel the weapon looked more akin to a rail gun or plasma pistol. I wondered why anyone would want a pistol sized rail gun before the technician pulled the gun off the wall and activated it.

Green lights chorused through lines on the side and a green light was visible in the barrel. My mind make the connection before it had even finished turning on: It was a Plasma Pistol.

"This is the Mirish Plasma Projector-1 or the MPP-1 for short. Internally it's a Covvie Plasma Pistol. Externally it's an M6C. Bottom line? It kills things."

"How does it work, like where does the battery go?" Julianne asked.

The techie smiled as he replied. "The battery goes where the magazine would on an M6C. For reference there's 350 shots without overcharging it." He demonstrated by ejecting the piece and showing it to us before placing it back in the weapon, turning it off. "There's only three of these though. They're the first production models."

"When can we use these?" Sophie asked.

"Right now." Another voice said. We all turned to see an ONI Captain. "Fireteam Rapier if you'll please follow me."

We did, the ONI technician telling us we could customize our weapons later.

We were led into a briefing room. In the middle a holographic table displayed a structure I wasn't familiar with. Also inside the room was the ONI Lieutenant, Lieutenant Miller.

"Good work with that Carrier SPARTANS. I had my doubts and yet here you are." She said.

None of us said anything.

"Onto business. This- " The Spook gestured towards the holographic projection. "-Is The Library. It is where the activation index for this ring is located. We want you to go retrieve it."

I nodded. "What about support?"

"The other SPARTANS, when they are extracted from their current assignment will assist you. We've also got a STARS set up orbiting the complex. The plan is for the five of you to insert via HEV on the northern side of the complex. You will then move inside and obtain the Index. The Covvies and Imps both have presences in and near the building so if you see any HVT's kill them. No one in that building is a friendly. Anything in there is to be treated as hostile. Any questions?"

"What do we do if the Covvies and Imps are fighting each other?" Michael asked.

The spook conferred with the ONI captain before turning back towards us.

"Do your best to ignore them but if you have to engage make it quick. Anything else?"

Michael raised his hand.

"Anything not having to do with a three way firefight?"

Michael put his hand down.

"Good. You have twenty minutes to prepare before you drop. Dismissed."

We saluted before donning our helmets and heading back to the weapons and gear.

We spent a good ten minutes getting our weapons ready, calibrating scopes, loading ammo, performing diagnostics.

For our weapons Emily, Sophie and myself kept the DMR's the way they were with the exception of Emily who modified her scope a little to give better range.

Michael traded the grip for a 40mm grenade launcher. The launcher could fire a variety of ammo types. from HE grenades to Airburst Shrapnel or remote detonated mines. It looked like an M320 grenade launcher from the 21st century to me.

Julianne took an under-barrel shotgun attachment in place of her grip. The shotgun was an 8 round, pump action beauty that she had primarily loaded with solid slugs fitted with explosive tips. While

the slugs wouldn't cause as much close up damage they could go farther than normal buckshot and the explosion would disorient if not outright kill the target.

When we were ready we headed towards the pods. There were six in total. We would be in five while the sixth one would be filled with extra ammo and supplies. We didn't know how long we'd be without support and it never hurt to be careful.

\_3...2...1...drop!\_ I thought as my pod rocketed out of the Prowler. I could see the rest of my team around me, we would land close together, thankfully.

I saw the building in the distance, covered in a light snowfall as more white particles floated down. I could also see Covenant and Imperial forces battling it out all over the valley below. I marked large concentrations of both sides and quickly found the best way to the building.

\_This is Lieutenant Miller to Rapier. Acknowledge.\_

\_Ma'am?" \_I asked

\_Disregard my previous briefing. Your support will come in the form of the Elites. Clear an LZ so they can land then move up with them. How copy?"\_

I wasn't working with them, none of us were working with them.

\_Rapier 1 do you copy?"\_

\_Yes Ma'am. Permission to speak freely?" \_I asked as my pod hit the ground, embedding itself in the snow. Around me my team landed, their hatch's exploding outwards as they jumped out, pistols and SMGs out and scanning for targets.

\_Granted.\_

\_With respect Ma'am my team would work best alone or with fellow UNSC personnel.\_

\_I don't like this anymore than you do Rapier. Just get through it. You'll be in command anyway.\_

\_Yes Ma'am. You can send them down now. the immediate area is secure." \_I said, sighing.\_

\_Copy that. Hang tight.\_

We waited for twenty long minutes before the Elites showed up. During that time we took the time to better familiarize ourselves with the new Pioneer armour. When the Elites finally arrived I gave a small snort of disgust. My team made similar noises. After being dropped off by a Phantom painted light green which also disgorged a Spectre transport the twenty aliens gathered around their leader, an Ultra.

"Prepare yourselves my brothers! We will cut a bloody path to the sacred Icon and burn any Heretics, False Reclaimers or Flood that

stand in our way! For the Great Journey!" He yelled, his Elites roaring and yelling out war cries as we watched. The Ultra turned towards me.

"The Parasite is not to be trifled with Demon. I hope you know what you're doing."

I nodded. "That makes two of us."

I waved my team forwards as the Elites took up our flanks. I checked my weapons one last time before heading into the darkness.

\* \* \*

><p><em>ONI armour file: <strong>GEN2 Pioneer<strong>\_

\_Date first used:\*\* 05/03/53\*\*\_\*\*  
><strong>

\_Preliminary information: The GEN2 Pioneer first saw use by members of ONI exploration team delta 12 on March fith twenty five fifty three while exploring Intallastion 03. \*\*(See attached file) \*\*The armour was noted to preform better than the widly used \*\*HAZOP (See attached file) \*\*and after successful completion of operations was outfitted to SPARTAN IV and ONI exploration teams operating on or near forerunner artifacts or in hostile environments in general. Recent upgrades have increased its sheild capacity and allowed for a rectangular barrier to be activated on command. Testing has proved the barrier is more than worth the added cost to install it.\_

\_The armour has been nicknamed "ringworld class armour" by SPARTAN IV Fireteams due to it almost exclusively being used on or near Halo installations.\_

\_End file...\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Woo! That was a long chapter! THE LONGEST I 'VE EVER WRITTEN, BY THE WAY! <strong>

\*\*Yes that's right you just read 8,003 words of story. \*\*

\*\*I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without the support of my Beta and partner theotherpianist. Thank you for all your hard work, my friend. :)\*\*

\*\*Please please leave a review! As I said before it'll brighten my day up and show me people read this story! \*\*

## 11. Chapter 11: Reunited Promotion

\*\*Hello everyone! I'm back. \*\*

\*\*Nothing much to say here except I own nothing but my OC's and Castle team is property of theotherpianist. \*\*

\*\*Please review after you finish reading, thanks.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"The best weapon against an enemy is another enemy."<em>

Friedrich Nietzsche

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Leutenant William Gunther, on the surface of the Halo ring, 06:12 hrs, July 11 2557 UNSC Military Calender/ Military Standard Time\*\*

The three SPARTANS and four Marines had been fighting for 55 minutes 41 seconds as of the Lieutenants mission clock.

The Flood had charged the group with every manner of attack pattern, from swarms of Infection Forms to Combat Forms with Carrier Forms dotted around to all three types at once. The Marines, for their part were doing quite admirably considering their inferior armour. The only one the Navy blue armoured Spartan was worried about was his White armoured EVA companion.

He didn't even need to think about the last member of their party.

The SPARTAN II was a blur of black armour on the battlefield, cutting, shooting, stabbing and destroying any Flood that got near her.

She had taken Chelsea's shotgun without a word. The EVA armoured soldier unable to do anything but mutter incoherently in her injured state. William almost stopped the SII until he saw her in action.

She pumped shell after shell into then mass of Flood that charged her, effortlessly switching between her Battle Rifle and the shotgun. Sometimes even using both at once.

Now was one of those times. The Black armoured Petty Officer had been in the mist of pulling out her Battle Rifle while at the same time reloading the shotgun when three Combat Forms charged her.

She fired the Battle Rifle one handed point blank into the red tendrils of the Combat Form's 'brain' destroying it while at the same time smashing the shotgun over the head of the second Combat Form before kicking it aside and blowing the last one away with the shotgun.

William knew some in the Marine Corps and Army found SPARTANS to be inhuman killing machines incapable of mercy or pity. Even though he himself was a SPARTAN William found a small part of himself agreeing with those people as he watched the Chief Petty Officer brutally decapitiate another trio of Combat Forms before quickly dispatching a swarm of Infection Forms that had gotten through the Marines lines of fire.

After that the field had grown quiet. No Flood attacked allowing the group a small breather.

"Ammo check." The SPARTAN III Lieutenant said.

He received varying replies from the ODST's ranging from "I'm good" to "I'm on my last mag." The SPARTAN II replied with a green acknowledgement light and William took this to mean she had enough ammo. Chelsea hadn't even used a full magazine for her pistol yet so Will didn't ask as the SPARTAN II grabbed ammo boxes from the Troop 'Hog and quickly handed out ammo.

Almost as soon as everyone topped off their ammo the Flood beset them again.

This time though the first Flood forms encountered were former UNSC personnel Will hesitated as he sighted in a former Naval Corpswoman.

Her fatigues were tattered and torn and her face was no more than a rotting hump of decaying skin, The bones visible in some parts. Her left arm wasn't an arm anymore but a claw like protrusion similar to the previous Flood encountered. For all intents and purposes this Flood shouldn't have been any different to the rest however it was her eyes that threw Will off.

Unlike the previous Flood encountered whose eyes had been lifeless shadows of their formerselves this woman's eyes showed intelligence but also...fright?

William wondered if somehow this Flood hadn't fully corrupted this woman like the rest.

Time slowed down as Will contemplated ending the life of this former ally. If he was right they could have an advantage over the Flood, maybe find a way to cure and sterilize it. If he was wrong his inaction could cause the entire groups demise.

It seemed as though the decision wasn't up to him as he saw from the corner of his eye one of the Marines with orange trim on its armour and wielding a Battle Rifle, Her IFF tag registering her as 'Private Mckenzie', turn and fire, the three rounds fired from her rifle hitting the infection form imbedded in the former Corpswoman's chest dead Center, destroying it and ending the threat of attack.

The SPARTAN III officer shook his head before focusing on the task at hand. That task being to survive.

For another hour the group fought. One hour of pure uninterrupted shooting before William saw a Combat Form charge him.

This Combat Form was a former Brute and apparently still held its passion for melee combat as it discarded its weapon and charged Will.

William didn't see the attack before it was to late and as he was tackled from the side briefly wondered if the Brute targeted him due to his armour. It didn't blend in very well here and thus he was an easy target. He had overheard some Marines discussing the very same issue on the Pelican ride down to the surface with one of them exclaiming about how statistically William should be dead.

This was thought was thrown out the window when the Brute dislodged

the Assault Rifle from Will's grasp and the SPARTAN III found himself on the defensive in a ferocious hand to hand grapple.

If it hadn't been for Private Mckenzie kicking the former Covenant in the ribs and shooting its brains out William was certain he would have been killed as he saw his shield which had been brought into the red zone slowly recharge.

He found himself looking into the black visor of the Private as she held out her hand to pull Will up. He took it gratefully.

"That's the second time I've saved your hide today sir. I hope I don't have to save it again." The young Helljumper said as Will quickly grabbed his discarded rifle and got to work mopping up the last of the Flood.

As the final Flood form was killed, William heard the unmistakable sound of a Pelican dropship approaching them. The entire group was ecstatic to see they weren't hearing things and the Marines let out cheers of joy when the Pelican landed, disgorging 15 more ODST's to secure the area. The leader, a woman by the way she walked, held an MA5K with an M90A shotgun on her back. She made her way over to the Lieutenant.

"Never thought I'd see you again El Tee." The woman, her IFF tag showing her to be Staff Sergeant Hailey, said, giving a mock salute. William returned it as he realized this was the same Staff Sergeant that had assisted the group on Naboo.

"Likewise Staff." William replied, remembered she had lost a quarter of her squad on Naboo. "You seem chipper."

"I'm just waiting for some action, sir." She said before looking at Chelsea. She swore "Goddamnit why didn't you tell me you had wounded. Perkins, we've got wounded over here!"

Another ODST moved over to Chelsea and with the help of Private's Mckenzie and Harbor managed to get the white armoured SPARTAN onboard the Pelican, the Staff Sergeant motioning for everyone else to get in as well.

After everyone was in the Pilot lifted the bird off without a word and soon they were rocketing away from the area.

"Where are we heading?" Private Mckenzie asked, yelling to be overheard by the Pelicans engines.

"We're heading to assist the other SPARTAN team." The Staff Sergeant said, gesturing at her squad. "You guys are heading back to the ship with everyone else."

"What do you mean everyone else?" The Chief Petty Officer asked.

"We're pulling out of the ring. Higher ups are worried about Flood infecting our people."

"That bad huh?" Will stated. The Staff Sergeant nodded.

"Helljumpers make ready!" The Pelican crew chief said. The 15 ODST's

that had rescued William and his team stood up or shuffled to the side to make room.

"Alright boys and girls let go rescue some more freaks!" Staff Sergeant Hailey said good naturedly. "How do we go?"

To their credit the 14 ODST's visibly made the SPARTAN II cringe when they yelled "We go feet first Staff Sergeant!"

"Damn right we do." The senior non-com muttered as her squad filed out, forming a perimeter, before she turned towards Will. "See you on the flip side, Sierra!" And with that she was gone.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109<strong>

I stared at the Lieutenant intently, I wasn't sure why I did. I had him figured out...I think.

It was his companion I wasn't sure about. She was good, they both were but she was glaring at me so hard I almost thought she would cut right through me.

"Problem Ma'am?" I asked when the tension became unbearable even to me. The Spartan huffed before turning towards her superior.

"When are we getting back out there?" She asked him. My mind briefly conjured up the image of her as I child asking a parent a question.

"Don't know. Whenever you've healed." The Lieutenant replied vaguely.

"I hate waiting." She mumbled.

"You had a rather large piece of metal in your gut a little over an hour ago and you want to be back out there? Are you insane!" One of the Marines yelled, clearly disapproving of the Warrant Officer's want for action.

I tuned out the rest of their conversation, focusing instead on how to deal with the new threat three different factions posed. I knew every group could be killed and if the could be killed they could be beaten.

In what felt like hours but was really only minutes we had entered the main docking bay of the Fire By Rank. The ship was bustling with activity with Pelicans refuelling and rearming as we exited, a team of medics and doctors rushed in with stretcher to assist the wounded SPARTAN.

"SPARTANS." A voice said from off to the side of the Pelican said. "Good work."

I turned to see five exceptionally tall figures wearing fatigues to small for them. The lead one, a woman with light brown hair and green eyes with the ranking of a Lieutenant Commander stepped forwards.

I saluted as did the Marines that had just come out of the Pelican.

"Ma'am!"

The woman returned the salute half heartedly.

"I assume Castle's One and Four are still in one piece?" The woman asked.

Castle Four muttered something unintelligible as she tried to jump from her stretcher forcing the doctors to restrain her.

"I wouldn't bet on it quite yet." I said. She had a piece of metal in her for over an hour." The woman nodded.

"I'm fine Asher." Castle Four groggily said as she was taken off the Pelican, her body filled with painkillers and morphine leaving the wounded SPARTAN III drowsy and unsure of her surroundings.

Two of the other tall figures detached themselves from the group and rushed over to her, bombarding the doctors with questions.

Castle One was the last to appear out of the Bloodtray, his helmet off clutched loosely to his side and his steps were ragged and tired.

When he caught sight of the woman he froze. Instantly he seemed to lose all tiredness and for the briefest of seconds his eyes which had been dull and melancholy became bright and alert.

"Chief, Marines. If you could vacate the area?" He said as he began to walk towards the woman and the other five figures, his steps and body becoming more animated with every step towards them.

I nodded, but secretly wanted to know how this played out. The Marines left wordlessly. However, as I passed the Lieutenant I muttered a single sentence I had never uttered before.

"It seems I was wrong about you, Lieutenant. You may actually be a SPARTAN."

I noted his reaction, a tiny nod of thanks and left the carnivorous hanger. I left the immediate area but my curiosity got the better of me and I hid behind a supply crate, letting the dark shadows cloak me.

I watched as the Lieutenant took the last three steps towards the woman before throwing his arms around her in a crushing hug which she gratefully returned.

It was hard to hear but thanks to my helmet and augmented hearing I heard quiet sobs coming from Castle One.

"Asher, your back, all of you...all of Castle." He choked out as the others came around.

I examined the woman's eyes. She looked pained for the briefest of seconds and shared a heartbreakingly look with the others as they themselves began to tear up.

"Not...not all of us." She said, becoming more emotional with each word spoken.

"What?" He asked looking at each of the people around him.

"Where's..." He counted six others. "Where's Ralph?"

The words were whispered so quietly even my helmet systems could barely make them out.

"He's uh..." The Woman said, clearing her throat. "He's dead."

"What?" Castle One asked as joy turned to shock. He recoiled as if he had been shot. "No no no no no!" He collapsed by another crate in anguish.

It was at that moment I became very self aware of myself. Here I was, an outsider intruding on their grief. As a SPARTAN I had seen and delivered death many times. I had learned to bottle my emotions up and separate them from the mission but when the mission was over...

I watched as the woman known as Asher and another blond haired woman took the Lieutenant's hands and carefully pulled him to his feet where the other two members, both males supported him as the group exited the hanger. I left silently afterwards, contemplating what I had seen. It was uneving seeing a SPARTAN, even if it was a Three break down into bitter tears.

They needed space to mourn, Castle One may have been almost as good or on par with myself but unlike me he was still human.

I was little more than a robot.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Staff Sergeant Vanessa Hailey<strong>

"See you on the flip side, Sierra!" I yelled before my boots touched the snow covered ground and the Pelican flew off, disappearing into the clouds. Around us I could hear the sounds of Covvie weapons fire mixed in with what I assumed was Imperial weapons as well.

"Okay people how are we today?" I asked over the squad comm.

"A-okay ready for pain!" The 14 Marines in my squad yelled.

"Larry, Gent and Howie you guys are Alpha 1 sweep right. Corrie, Jenkins and Daniels are Alpha 2 sweep left. Everyone else you know where to be." I said, my squad moving to their pre-designated pattern.

"I've got movement high. Imperial shuttle." My sniper, Wilkins said.

"Hold fire. Suggy paste him." I said. One of my men, a Lance Corporal, armed with an M41 rocket launcher grabbed the weapon off his back, took a knee and after a few seconds yelled "Lock!"

His partner, Private Allison or 'Allie' yelled "fire!" The one rocket

was sent blasting out of its tube and I saw the imperial ship attempt to dodge to no avail as the rocket impacted its right wing, ripping it off and causing the shuttle to crash in a ball of fire near our position.

"Alpha sweep for Hostiles. If you find any still breathing put 'em down." I said, motioning the first teams forwards. The six ODST's compiled without a word, moving quickly to the downed shuttle, their weapons raised and scanning for targets.

"Clear!" Alpha 1's leader, Larry yelled.

"Alpha stay put. Everyone else move up!" I said as the nine of us remaining quickly jogged over to Alpha's position.

"Staff Sergeant the IFF tags point the Spartan team to be in that direction. Inside the structure." One of my Helljumpers, Private Holding, a young kid from London England who joined at 16, or that's what she said to me though she seemed that age now which was illegal as you needed 2 years experience to join the ODST's, said pointing at the rather large building to our west.

"Can you communicate with them?" I asked. We had been told there were jammers in the area.

The young most likely underage British Marine shook her head.

"Damn. Alright people let's move into the giant ass building." I said.

"Stay frosty guys." Corporal Romomev muttered. "Where the hell do you think they are?"

"Who? The aliens or the SPARTANS? Or do you mean the humans from another galaxy?" The squad's medic, Corpsman Perkins replied.

"Don't know. I just hope we don't get attacked by Flood. I've heard stories about them, you know." Private Holding said, gripping her Battle Rifle tighter.

"Oh yeah? Like what Greenhorn?" Lance Corporal Gent his DMR hanging freely from his left hand, challenged.

"My older brother served in the Marines when the Covvies were digging in New Mombassa..." The young Private cleared her throat before swallowing hard and continuing. "Uh the Flood attacked his Platoon right. So they're all infected except my brother and his mate were the only ones left. The infected members saw them both and just...just tore into my brothers mate. These were former comrades, his Platoonmembers no less and they just..." She stopped talking, the emotions to much for her to handle.

The rest of the sqaud had fallen silent, no one spoke. It was eerie to say the least.

"We'll be fine. Don't you worry kid. We'll make it out of this. I give you my word." Daniels said to Holding giving her a pat on the back, ever the gentleman.

"I hope so. Hey Staff Sergeant?" Holding said.

"Yeah."

"Uhm...i-if I'm ever infected you'll kill me right? End my pain?" The young Marine asked. I turned to face her. She had unpolarized her visor allowing me to see her bright green eyes and bits of her shoulder length chestnut coloured hair. Her face was one of fright. She was scared.

I didn't tell her I was to.

"Contact! Unknown IDENT!" Private Larry yelled, coming to a crouch with the rest of the squad following.

"Whisper!" I yelled. Whisper was the UNSC identification sign. The response was 'Shadow'.

"Shadow! friendly's coming out!" I heard a male voice through the darkness as my squad breathed a sigh of relief.

I saw five figures wearing sleek unfamiliar armour. The armour was black and white and the visor was two circles one on top of the other coloured aqua or cyan. I couldn't tell.

"You guys the SPARTANS?" I asked. The one in front nodded. "You gonna give me a name or are you just going to stand there?"

"SPARTAN G-097. Leader of Fireteam Rapier."

"Staff Sergeant Hailey, of Hades squad, at your service." I said doing a small bow. A few of my Marines chuckled.

"Right then...was that you who took down the Imp shuttle?" G097 asked.

"Sure as hell wasn't the Covvies." Lance Corporal Suggy muttered from behind me.

"Noted Marine. Hades squad follow me!" The SPARTAN said.

We walked for awhile, the SPARTAN team was silent as were my Helljumpers. I needed to calm my nerves so I started singing.

"Helljumper, Helljumper where you been?" I hollered at the top of my lungs.

"Helljumper, Helljumper where you been?" My squad, and I could've sworn the SPARTAN's, yelled back.

"Feet first into hell and back again!" I continued.

"Feet first into hell and back again!"

"When I die please bury me deep!"

"When I die please bury me deep!"

"Fix an MA5 down by my feet!"

\_ "Fix an MA5 down by my feet!" \_

"Don't cry for me don't shed no tear!"

\_ "Don't cry for me don't shed no tear!" \_

"Just pack my bag with some PT gear!"

\_ "Just pack my bag with some PT gear!" \_

" 'Cuz early one morning 'bout zero five!"

\_ " 'Cuz early one morning 'bout zero five!" \_

"The ground will rumble there'll be lightning in the sky!"

\_ "The ground will rumble there'll be lightning in the sky!" \_

"Don't you worry don't come undone!"

\_ "Don't you worry don't come undone!" \_

"It's just my Ghost on a PT run!"

\_ "It's just my Ghost on a PT run!" \_

"Oh Helljumper Helljumper where you been?"

\_ "Oh Helljumper Helljumper where you been?" \_

"Been to and fro and back again!"

\_ "Been to and fro and back again!" \_

"Now Helljumper, Helljumper where you been?"

\_ "Now Helljumper, Helljumper where you been?" \_

"Been out on a drop gonna' drop again!"

\_ "Been out on a drop gonna' drop again!" \_

As the song ended I laughed under my helmet as I saw Private Holding walk beside one of the SPARTAN's.

"So uh what armour is that?" She asked. The SPARTAN turned to look at my Marine, it's two eyeholes boring into her causing Holding to step back.

The SPARTAN, a female, chuckled dryly. "Modified GEN2 Pioneer."

"Modified how?" The young Private asked.

"Extra shields and something called a Barrier, don't ask about the last one as I've not used it yet."

"I'd die for kit like that." I said, butting in.

The SPARTAN turned to me, nodding. "If I had to choose I'd use my old

gear. I prefer SPI to this though it has some advantages, like the barrier, for example."

"Staff Sergeant Hailey hold your squad here. We'll do some recon then call you forwards if we need to." The SPARTAN team leader said, motioning towards his team to start moving.

"Yes sir."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Corporal Roon Aboab, (TK-4456) Unknown ring-world, one year after Order 66<strong>

The life of a AT-AT Pilot wasn't as glamorous as I thought. \_See the Galaxy, they said. Kill some terrorists, they said. What a load of poodoo! \_I was now stuck on some ring world in the middle of nowhere with mud covering my beautiful Walker's legs.

"Hey Captain! Why are we on this sith forsaken planet?" One of my four other other crewmates and the only other female trooper in said crew asked.

"Because, RK-2323, the Empire wants whatever it is that's down here. Be it giant death crystals or little pink fairy's." The walker commader, a stocky man by the name of Vinters, replied in his always cheery voice.

"But Captain! I'm getting mud in my feet! It's disgusting!" If there's one notable thing RK-2323 had over the rest of us it was that she was still a pampered little princess.

"You meant the Walker, right?" I asked, trying to ignore her annoying voice.

"Same thing." She replied.

"Not really. The walker is a four-legged death dealing machine of awesome power!" I said, my voice growing ever more excited as I spoke. "And then there's you."

She shoved me lightly. "Your worse than a Gungan." She said.

"Oh really?" I asked in my best core world accent. "Then what are you? A Rancor?"

"Focus on the task at hand." Vinters said, causing the both of us to begin performing our jobs, that is I was sweeping the two heavy turbolasers over anything that looked dangerous while RK-2323 kept the Walker on a steady course. We hadn't found anything living to kill, sadly. I guess our bombers were better than I thought.

After another hour of monotonous walking we exited the swampy marshland and came to the exterior of some alien structure. We ordered to stop to allow our ground troops to disembark.

"That's odd." Rk-2323 said, turning towards me. "We didn't take on any stormies."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, near the Library, 07:14 hrs, July 11  
2557UNSC Militay Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"So...anyone wonder why we haven't seen or heard from the Elites yet?" Michael asked as we passed another junction.

I was wondering were they were myself as we had said we'd keep in constant contact with each other. I said as much.

"So what do you think happened to them?" Julianne asked, her black and white armour making her almost invisible in the low light. The only thing giving her away was the cyan coloured visors we all had.

"No idea." I said as I stepped over the body of a flood combat form, it's ragged and sickly skin burned by plasma. "But we know they came through here."

"Boss there's an atrium past the next corner. You're gonna wanna see this." Julianne said. I made my way around the corner.

I found every single Elite dead. A precise energized hole in all their heads. Seeing it in a place so empty made my hairs stick up, it would have been perfect in some stupid horror film.

"They're all dead sir." Sophie said as she examined one of the bodies, inserting her fingers into the not so gory mess that had been an Elite's head. "The shot went clean through."

"What did this?" I asked quietly as Emily walked between the bodies and to the other side of the atrium.

My sniper turned towards me. "There aren't any enemy bodies, sir."

"And there wouldn't be." A voice said. It sounded like it came from all directions. My team raised their weapons as I quickly signalled orders.

"Show yourself!" I yelled, my pulse spiking.

"As you wish." The voice, belonging to a man wearing a black Imperial uniform said as he stepped into the light. Other armoured individuals wearing black Stormtrooper armour appeared, their weapons pointed and raised at us.

"Before you ask I am Inquisitor August Mortis of the Imperial Inquisition. Thank you for falling right into my clutches." He smiled deviously.

\_ "Orders?" \_ Julianne asked over a closed comm channel. \_ "I can't raise the Marines. Long range comms are being jammed." \_

I thought for a few seconds as neither side fired. There were fourteen black armoured troopers plus that Inquisitor. All of them had perfect fields of fire on us and they'd whittle our shields down in seconds.

\_ "2, 4 get beside me, nice and tight. 3 and 5 get behind us. On the

count of three the front row deploys the barriers while the back fires from inbetween, like a phalanx. Move back the way we came so we can shore up in the hallway. 3...2...!" \_I yelled as my team preformed the maneuver, forming a shield wall while Emily and Michael fired between us.

It wasn't without damage, however as the enemy had fired as soon as we began to move, dropping my shield to halfway and depleting Sophie's entirely. We slowly backpedled, the black troopers firing for all they were worth though the shields held and in some cases sent the rounds back towards the troopers that fired them. I kept my eyes on the timer, finding we had only maybe twenty seconds before the Barriers collapsed.

We encountered a new problem, however in that the enemy armour appeared bulletproof.

\_ "I've got no effect on target! I'm not getting through!" \_Emily yelled as she reloaded.

The enemy realized they to weren't breaking the shields and it wasn't long until they began to target our feet or our sides. We still had halfway to go before we could retreat down the corridor.

I thought we were almost home free when I saw Julianne's shield collapse. The Stormtroopers noticed this and poured fire onto her, depleting her personal shield and causing her to trip. I moved to cover her which unintentionally left everyone else exposed.

I dropped my Barrier and helped her up only to get punched into the ground by two of the troopers. I fought them, I kicked and punched and grabbed but they overpowered me and stunned me.

My armour locked up, leaving me to watch as they took down my team, one by one.

Julianne was stunned along with me before she could fight back, one of the troopers ripping her helmet off and repeatedly punching her in the face before kicking her unconscious even after her armour was locked up.

Michael was tackled by three troopers and kicked in the side and head before being stunned himself.

Sophie was shot by a regular bolt in the foot, the round going clean through her depleted shield and armour before she to was beaten into submission then stunned.

Emily was shot in the arm and torso by a regular bolt, she fell clutching her burned and black stomach, firing her rifle in one hand while she did before she to was stunned. I soon saw the imposing form of the Inquisitor standing over me, his hands were behind his back and his face was a scene of triumph.

"And you were so very close to. Shame you didn't make it." He said, his smile growing all the more prominent. He turned towards his men. "Round them up and get them aboard the shuttle. Use the droids if you have to. We don't have much time."

It was at that point I blacked out.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Chief Petty Officer Elise-109, aboard UNSC <em>Fire By Rank<em>\*\*

I paced around my quarters expectantly, waiting to be called into the briefing room for a debrief.

I had left the hanger with the Marines in tow while the members of Castle team, all of them, reacquainted themselves with each other and mourned their loss.. I had been directed to my quarters while the officers dealt with the ever present situation of five new SPARTANS on the ship. Finally I was called in.

The room held the ONI Lieutenant, the ships Captain and both the ship and ONI A.I.

"There's not much to debrief SPARTAN. Except your encounter with the flood. How would you say they acted?" The ONI spook asked.

"They wore me out Ma'am. I've never encountered them before. They were...unexpected."

"Do you feel we are adequately equipped to deal with an outbreak should it occur onboard the ship?" The Captain asked, his brow laced with concern.

"No sir. The best bet would be to cordon off sections of the ship that are contaminated and commence depressurization. Even then it's unlikely we could stop it, sir."

He nodded, understanding.

"The Lieutenant and his team, what do you think of them?" The ONI Lieutenant asked, her fingers drumming on the table.

"Ma'am? I can't speak for the rest of his unit though the Lieutenant and Castle Four both preformed admirably in combat. I'd fight with them again, if needed."

"But you wouldn't like it." The ONI A.I said.

"Correct. I prefer to work alone or in a two man team. Other people just get in the way."

The ONI Lieutenant nodded before turning towards the Captain. He stood up and made his way to me. As I was standing I merely turned to face him.

"Thank you for your time. We'll go over what information your helmet recorded as well as that gained by the Marines. Dismissed, \_Master Chief." \_He said, holding out a small box containing the chevrons. I saluted.

\_Master Chief Petty Officer. Finally.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Staff Sergeant Vanessa Hailey<strong>

"Sarge how long do we gotta' stay here?" One of my more mouthy Helljumpers whined.

"Until we're needed, Huckley. Though we should've gotten a call by now."

"Maybe they're getting jammed?" Holding asked.

"Maybe." I muttered. Holding see if you can contact the ship, everyone else cover your sectors and watch your backs."

"I've got a bad feeling about this." Perkins said.

Huckley nodded. "Yeah. But what is-"

I didn't even hear the shot that caused Huckley's head to explode like a balloon, nor the five follow up shot. I didn't realize until later that they were all headshots, through the visor no less.

"Man down!"

"Where is he? I don't see him!"

"I've got three on my left! Shift left!"

"The armour's bulletproof! No effect on target!"

"Listen up everyone!" I yelled over the shouts of my Marines and the chatter of gunfire. "These SOB fucked with the wrong squad. The armour's bulletproof so we're going to have to grenade them or rush them."

"Are you fucking insane Sarge?" One of my Helljumpers by the name of Jackson asked. He had a point, that plan was nuts.

Unfortunately we didn't get to do either plan as the enemy decided to charge us. I watched as one of the black armoured stormtroopers rushed through a barricade we had constructed and tackled the Marine I was staring at.

With one swift motion the trooper broke Jacksons arm before plunging a knife into his neck. I fired at the trooper but my rounds only bounced off the armour. The trooper pulled a pistol out, aimed at me and fired three rounds. Thankfully I ducked behind another barricade.

Holding appeared next to me, her back right up against the barricade, her hands gripping her rifle in a death grip. I shook her lightly.

"Did you contact the ship?" She didn't respond. "Holding?" I shook her harder this time only to see her slump forward showing me the hole in her back.

I checked my HUD and found to my horror that there were only three of us left. "Hades squad sound off!" I yelled over squad-com.

"Suggy and Allison!" I heard. "Can you make it to us?"

-

"\_Negative. There's Hostiles all over the place!\_" I said. "\_Stay pu-\_" I felt something connect to the back of my helmet, throwing me to the floor. Before I had a chance to retaliate I was turned to face the black helmet of an enemy Stormtrooper. He was pointing his black rifle at me and I knew what was coming.

"Fuck you! You hear me? Fu-"

The shot was heard for miles around as the last bastion of UNSC controlled territory on the Halo collapsed.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Emily-G045, location unknown<strong>

I was the only one awake. The only one who knew roughly were we were and the only one the enemy cared for. Or they would have, if they knew I was awake to begin with.

I had watched them take us to a large four legged Walker and lift us, one by one into it's hold. From there we were taken to a shuttle and soon were rocketing into space.

Along the way they took off all our helmets, gauntlets and my chest piece as it was little more than a burnt out slag. I had almost jumped up and attacked them when they removed my chest piece. I knew it was useless but it gave me an extra layer of protection even though it was ruined. Because of that I was armour less from the waist up wearing only my undersuit as protection.

We were taken from a hanger bay through a twisting, winding corridor to what appeared to be a detention block or a brig. We were separated into two's with Michael and Sophie in one cell, Kevin and Myself in another and Julianne alone.

Two troopers threw me right behind Kevin into the cell and I bit back a grunt as I landed on my elbow wrong, twisting it. I knew they were probably watching us though I paid it no mind as I wordlessly lifted up Kevin, grunting from the weight of his armour and deposited him in a bed.

The cell was small, less than two metres in length and a meter from side to side. There was a sink in one corner and two beds on either wall, facing the door. I made my way to the other bed, lying down on the hard mattress, rested my head on my hands, crossed my legs and waited.

Thankfully I didn't have to wait long, maybe fifteen minutes in total as Kevin groggily woke up, nursing a bruise on his head he received from being thrown.

"What happened?" He asked, getting up. I didn't look in his direction as I replied.

"You were knocked out, the whole team was. We're on a ship as prisoners of that Inquisitor. Before you ask I wasn't knocked out like the rest of you and they removed our armour. We're all in different cells."

Kevin stood up, coming to stand beside me. "You played possum?" I nodded. "Then you memorized the route out of here?"

"Yep." I said, smiling.

"That'a girl." Kevin looked at the door. "They'll be coming for us, to interrogate us."

"Yeah."

"We'll need to break out."

"Yeah." I sat up, nursing my hurt elbow. "I could pretend my stomach hurts because of the burn."

"Does it?"

I nodded.

"Status?"

"I'm green, Rapier Lead. Just give the word."

"We should wait until the rest of the team is awake, see if we can meet with them. Then we find our weapons and armour and hightail it out of here."

I nodded before reaching into one of my last remaining ammo pouches.

I smiled as I saw the item I was looking for was intact. I pulled it out and began to read, smiling to myself as I found the page I had left off of.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, aboard enemy ship<strong>

I sighed for the third time as I tried to think of a way to get out of here. I had hoped Emily would help but it seems she was content to read, at least for now. The book was a paperback, a blue exterior with a red figure I couldn't make out on the front.

"Where'd you get that?" I asked, genuinely curious. She looked up, moving a bit of her black hair from her pale face and smiled.

"I keep it in my left waist ammo pouch."

"Why? And who reads paperbacks anymore?"

"I do. And I like the book." She said, reading another page.

"Which is?" I asked, expecting more.

"\_Catch 22." \_She said.

"Never heard of it." I replied. She moved around to a more comfortable position, her back resting against the wall.

"I hadn't heard of it either. Until we raided that Innies base on Luna

in '53, remember?"

I did remember that claustrophobic death trap of a base and shuddered. "Yes."

"Well I found the book when we finished, read a bit and enjoyed it."

"How did you hide that from us?" I queried.

"Read it when everyone fell asleep."

"You didn't hear anything, did you?"

She silently chuckled. "Of course I did. What are you keeping for her, anyway?"

"Uh..." It was a touchy subject.

She stopped reading and turned to face me fully, her face one of uncertainty. "Are you keeping secrets? Come on, I won't tell anyone."

"It's our last names. I remember her's and she remembers mine." I said, looking at the floor.

"So what is it, boss?" She pestered. "Oh come on, spill!" She said, lightly punching me in the shoulder.

I sighed, bringing the count to four. "Parker. Her last name was Parker."

Emily looked down at her bed. "It's a nice name, Julianne Parker." She mumbled.

"Your name is nice to, Emily Fielding." I said, sitting beside her.

"How do you-"

"It's on your record, Valkrie." I replied, a smile coming to my lips.

"No one calls me that anymore." She shot back.

"I know but it sounds cool, right?"

"You know my parents called me that. Not just you guys." She said softly.

"Seriously?" I asked. "That's...coincidental."

"Tell me about it." She sighed. "What do you remember, from the freighter?"

"You mean the freighter where we lost everything? Where our parents died?"

"You mean your parents. Mine died in the first few minutes of the attack on the colony."

"And then when the freighter was boarded you lashed out."

"No. I hid in the back passages and closets until the Marines saved me." She replied.

"Nope. I remember you killed that grunt, right? With its own gun." I said, crossing my arms.

"Yeah, I-" The cell door opened, revealing two black armoured troopers. They raised their weapons and fired, hitting me with a stun round, I saw they did the same with Emily as I blacked out, my head hitting the hard floor of the cell.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Civilian freighter <em>Dust, <em>14:05 hrs, March 25 2545 / UNSC Military Calendar/ Military Standard Time\*\*

The little girl ran from the barrage of noises, the screams, gunfire, explosions. They scared her, reminded her of the last time she saw her family. The soldiers said she'd be safe here, they said the monsters wouldn't find her here.

They were wrong.

The monsters had boarded the ship as it was leaving the system, the pitiful escort of a Paris-class Frigate was destroyed almost instantly by the swarm of plasma torpedoes leaving the freighter alone and defenceless.

The Marines stationed aboard were fighting with Valor befitting a Spartan, they had set up kill zones at every airlock, corridor and doorway, all in an effort to keep the bridge and main cargo hold packed with civilians secure.

"Cover that bulkhead! Response team Delta 5-9 to position Beta!" A passing Marine yelled into a radio, frantic calls and gunfire coming from the other side.

The soldiers passed the girl without a word, they had bigger things to deal with than a scared girl lost and alone. One of the soldiers, however, stopped.

"Hey kid! Civvies are this way!" He yelled, pointing towards the cargo hold. "Ah Christ, come here." He muttered as he realized he should escort her. He took her hand, his rifle held in the other.

They ran for a bit, passing other soldiers and damaged bulkheads, the power was out in this section, giving the surroundings a menacing feel. The girl gripped the soldiers hand tighter.

"Almost there kid, alm-" The man muttered before he was thrown to the ground by an explosion. Out of the smoke walked a lone Grunt, a Major, if it's red markings were true. It fired its plasma pistol, impacting the still struggling Marine in the left arm and chest. He screamed in agony as his skin burned and withered, the armour melting and causing him further harm.

The Grunt, having not seen the girl due to the darkness of the ship decided to feast on the now dead man, the alien leaving its plasma pistol near the girl unknowingly.

The girl, tears streaming down her face and knowing, even in her four year old mind that if she was seen she would die picked up the pistol as silently as she could, she pointed it at the Grunt, now face first in the Marines chest and gouging on one piece of meat or another didn't hear the girls shaky breath or hear the pistol shaking in her hands until it was to late.

The girl fired, sending one green blob of plasma hurtling towards the Grunt. The small alien noticed only at the last second, it's face covered in human blood and gore until the plasma hit it. The alien was sent to the ground with an ear piercing scream that sent the girl back into the darkness, her hands covering her ears.

She stayed there for what felt like hours, her body cramped up and her arms tired as she still gripped the pistol. In the other parts of the ship the fighting continued, the sounds of gunfire and plasma interspersed with screams, both human and alien, soon though all fell quiet.

The girl saw figures appear, four of them, massive, towering figures.

The girl whimpered, knowing that this was the end. The monsters had found her.

She raised the pistol in one last stance of defiance, of existence. She would not let death take her, not without taking one of the monsters with her.

The leading figure held up it's hand in a fist. As one the quartet halted.

A voice pierced the silence. "Lower the weapon, we're here to help." The voice was gruff, stern but laced with a hint of honesty. One of the figures approached, the leader. As he came into the light the girl saw he wasn't a mean evil alien, but a man. At least she thought he was a man.

He wore green armour, a helmet with a gold visor covered his eyes and mouth and he held a silver rifle tightly. Painted in white on his chest armour were three numbers:

117

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So this chapters done with. <strong>

\*\*If you noticed the Inquisitor is a main character in his own story, 'Of Shadows and Sins'. The stories are not connected at all. I just thought it'd be cool to have OC's vs OC's and, y'know because I can.\*\*

\*\*I know some of you will be wondering why I promoted Elise to Master Chief Petty Officer and why she skipped the rank of Senior Chief Petty Officer. Before any of you state that John-117 is already an

MCPO, yes I know and no, others CAN hold that rank. Technically John-117 is Master Chief Petty Officer Of The Navy. Not just a Master Chief. (He was promoted posthumously after Halo 3)\*\*

\*\*Thanks to my Beta and partner theotherpianist for allowing me to use his characters and including my own in his story as well as being a very good Beta. \*\*

\*\*Remember to please review! :)\*\*

## 12. Chapter 12: Enter the Inquisitor

\*\*Hello everyone! I'm back! \*\*

\*\*Firstly SUPER SORRY for being two months late! I recently lost a family member very dear to me and as such have been focused on my family instead of fanfiction. \*\*

\*\*Now that that's out of the way on to reviews!\*\*

\*\*Guest1: Yeah I toyed with the idea of having my Inquisitor mention the events of this novel in his own but thought I'd take it up a notch. And no, he won't be dying any time soon.\*\*

\*\*willeomoegraff: The next two chapters after this are all backstory, so, don't worry. And thanks!\*\*

\*\*Guest2: Actually Stormtrooper armour is bulletproof in official canon, so this is actually a non canon depiction of their regular armour. Only the Inquisitor's troops are bulletproof.\*\*

\*\* Lastly I'd like to say this is a VERY dark chapter with a dabble in torture of a minor, (legally, though ONI has no qualms about child soldiers so...) Suicide and a bunch of other stuff. So be warned though it's not major and can't really be called torture.\*\*

\*\*Enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>"Once you have eliminated the impossible what ever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."<em>

Arthur Conan Doyle

\* \* \*

><p><em>"The subjects are prepared, sir."<em>

"Good. A half dosage?"

"Yes sir, though again I must protest, such a dosage on beings so young could have dama-"

"They'll handle it, have faith. And even if they do die there are still three more of them in the cells."

"Of course, sir."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Emily-G045, 07:05 hrs [ERROR, TIME UNKNOWN] July 12 2557 UNSC Military Calendar/ Military Standard Time\*\*

I woke up slowly, my body ached and hurt, especially my chest which felt as if it was on fire. Considering I had been hit by a plasma bolt square in the chest that caused my armour to melt, I thought that seemed like an accurate assessment. I was in a bright room on a slab facing the door. I was restrained at my arms and legs and my eyes hurt from the bright light the room provided. the room was almost entirely white barring the black humanoid robot and the black door.

I struggled against the restraints but found they wouldn't budge. The door opened, admitting two of those black stormtroopers and that Inquisitor person. The two troopers flanked the door, their weapons out across their chests.

The Inquisitor walked over to me, his hands clasped behind his back and a knowing smile on his face. His short black hair was neatly hidden under his cap with only his sideburns peeking out. His green eyes were subdued and his demeanor was one of calm. He wore a black greatcoat with a red and gold sash across his chest. I saw what looked like a very ornate pistol under his coat, holstered.

"Feeling alright, are you comfortable?" He asked in a silky smooth voice. "I suppose it doesn't matter anyway. You won't need comfort."

I said nothing, merely staring into him. I wasn't afraid of torture, I knew how to fight it, to deal with it. I was quite confident in my abilities

"I'll explain what will happen, alright? Right now a drug known as TXT-126 is coursing through your body. This drug will... 'loosen your lips'. Essentially you won't be able to keep quiet. The drug was illegal during the days of the Republic and still is though members of the Inquisition have the proper clearance to utilize it. I implore you to not resist. The dosage you were given is a quarter higher than normal. If you resist you will feel excruciating pain."

And with that my confidence shattered. My face must have said it all as the Inquisitor chuckled. "I assure you this won't hurt, you won't feel anything. Now lets begin with something simple shall we? What is your name?"

I fought it, I really did. I fought it with all my being. "SPARTAN Emily Fielding Gamma-045."

"Good, where were you born and when?"

"UNSC Colony Victoria, Cancer city..J-January 1st 2540." I bit down on my tongue, hard. It hurt immensely though I pushed it to the corner of my mind.

"Good, very good." The Inquisitor said, smiling. "Now your training...when did it start?"

I was still biting down on my tongue, I tasted copper in my mouth and I knew I bit hard enough to draw blood. I still clamped my mouth shut. "I'll ask again. When did your training start?" I didn't speak.

The Inquisitor frowned before turning towards the robot in the corner. "You did give her the half dosage correct?"

"Yes sir, to your specifications."

"Check her pulse." The droid ran some sort of scanner over me before checking the results.

"She is within optimal levels, sir."

The Inquisitor turned back to me, his face confused. "I'll ask one more time. When did your training start?" I stared at him, my mouth still closed. He turned back to the robot. "Give her the full dose."

The robot complied, holding a syringe filled with a light blue liquid. Without a word it injected it into my neck.

Suddenly I felt different, wrong.

I felt very lightheaded, I lost vision and hearing and could feel my heart beating faster and faster. I opened my mouth to scream only to have the blood from my tongue drip out.

The Inquisitor's frown deepened. "Check her pulse again."

The robot did as asked. "Sir, her heart is failing. She can't take the dosage."

"Where's the counter? TXU-143?"

"That will not save her, sir. The current dosage is too strong."

"Are you sure? Can we perhaps stop the flow?.."

"Possible."

"Do it." He replied before punching me in the stomach. "As you recently heard the drug is slowly killing you. You have an hour tops before you die though that's the best estimate. In reality you may very well die in the next few minutes."

"Sir her body is going into shock." The robot said though I only barely heard it as an alarm sounded. The troopers tensed.

The Inquisitor became agitated. "Damn!" He went right up into my face. "What is the purpose of that ring world? What powers It?" I was shaking now, my body losing control of itself as the drug took over.

"She is too far gone, sir."

"You two out!" The Inquisitor yelled, pointing at his troopers before turning to the robot. "Sedate her then leave as well! Now!" The robot jabbed another needle into my neck then left, leaving me and the

Inquisitor.

"I thought there'd be more time! There should have been more time! But there's never enough time! Dammit!" He pushed some buttons beside the table I was on lowering it to its original state. I saw out of the corner of my eye the Inquisitor unholster his pistol as I began to black out.

"I'm truly sorry about this. Really I am. I hold all the blame here...I-I hope in you can forgive me. This will be quick, I promise." He said, his breathing laboured and heavy as he loaded and cocked the pistol. He walked out the door after reholstering his weapon as the last vestiges of consciousness left me.

Thankfully I didn't hear the explosion.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, 07:15 hrs (ERROR, TIME UNKNOWN) July 12 2557 UNSC Military Calendar/ Military Standard Time\*\*

I found myself in a small white room, if I had seen the same room Emily was in I would have known our rooms were the same. I was strapped to a table, a robot had injected a light blue liquid into me as soon as I woke up. I had sat in silence as the sound of an alarm reverberated off the stark white walls. I was unsure what was happening. Had the UNSC found us? Was the ship being boarded?

I had quite a lot of time to myself as I waited only to have that Inquisitor come through the door with two of those black troopers behind him.

"Take him back to his cell. Have the others been contained?" He said. One of the troopers nodded. "Seal those hull breaches and cordon those fighters. Tell the Serpent to overload her batteries and get a fighter screen around us. I won't have this ship gutted by a lucky shot."

I was manhandled by the two troopers who were visibly grunting under the strain of lifting me. I grinned mischievously.

They carried me back to my cell, Emily was nowhere to be found. I heard the muddled sound of an explosion as I hit the hard metal deck.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Longsword Interceptor Bravo-235, 09:34 hrs, July 12 2557 UNSC Military Calendar/ Military Standard Time\*\*

Warrant Officer Keith 'Bloodhound' Richards hastily evaded the twin green beams of the enemy fighter, around him other fighters closed in on him, their own beams firing at the lone Interceptor.

"Enemy targets closing at bearing zero-four-zero! Two more of those 'H' fighters!" His co-pilot and systems technician yelled as he scanned the display.

"Why did we sign up for this shit?" The third member of the crew, the medical expert yelled.

"Fuck if I know!" The fourth and final member of the crew, the weapons technician. "It'll be a milk-run, he says, it's just an recon run, he says! Fuck the old man for sending us on this horseshit mission!"

Bloodhound agreed with his weapons tech as the Longsword blew another fighter out of the sky...er...space.

There had been three other Interceptors flying with them but one by one they had been hit. Bravo-234 had been the first to go, her fuselage ruptured by one of the countless bolts fired. The Longsword had exploded, and an unlucky piece of wing had impacted Bravo-233 smack in the view screen, exposing all to the cold vacuum of space. Bravo-232 had been the last fighter to meet her end, her hull peppered with laser fire. Her crew was still alive but they were drifting in space, unable to do anything but watch Bravo-235 partake in a deathly dance with her Imperial opposites.

They had been part of a fighter recon pickett sent near the Halo and the group had accidentally found an enemy corvette and two of those diamond shaped cruisers.

The cruisers had launched their complement of fighters and they had swarmed the Longswords before their pilots or crews could do anything.

"Mitchell Bravo-232's IFF is gone!" The co-pilot yelled.

"Shit! They were sitting ducks." Mitchell replied. "We are tactically retreating. I don't want to get spaced like the rest of them!" He yelled.

He turned the rather large Interceptor to head back to the Marathon only to find the enemy corvette in the way.

In that moment Warrant Officer Keith Mitchell knew he was dead. The laser Blast hit the Longsword in her right wing, causing her to spin and careen uncontrollably. The crew passed out almost instantly as the ship nosedived the corvette, hitting it in the center of a very stylized gold eagle on the other wise black hull.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Julianne-G123<strong>

The explosion threw me to the deck hard as I lost my footing. I face planted, most likely breaking my nose as blood continually gushed from it.

I moved to the door, intent on asking for something to stop the bleeding when I over heard two of the troopers hurriedly talking. Not so silent after all then. In my time around these black armoured troops they had never spoke out loud, either they were talking over a closed comm network or they were just exceptionally good at staying quiet.

"What the hell was all that?"

"Don't know. All I heard was that it hit the Captain's eagle."

"Not again. He'll be as mad as ever. Where'd it hit exactly?"

"The left side of the ship. Do you know what that is in Navy terms?"

"No, why would I. Let the Navy deal with the Navy and we'll deal with everything else."

"Speaking of Navy do you know why we're high-tailing it to the edge of the system?"

"No idea. But I trust the Inquisitor and the captain. They wouldn't run without a reason."

"Excuse me?" I asked through the cell, my voice an odd tone as I was covering my still bleeding nose.

One of the troopers turned towards me. He sighed and left, hopefully getting me something for my nose. I sat back down on the hard bed and waited, knowing I'd have. A lot of waiting to do.

I hate waiting.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Venator class Cruiser <em>Rancor<em>\*\*

Captain Lunfhg Herda was a well respected captain of the Imperial Navy and the Republic before it and had been one of the first to command a Venator class at the outbreak of hostilities between the Republic and the Separatists and had commanded with honor at the final battle of the war.

He had been given special command of a reinforcement fleet to a set of unknown co-ordinates. When the fleet, numbering three Venators and four Victory-II's jumped in system he was surprised to find an unfamiliar corvette inbetween two Victory-I's.

The ship was all black with a red line going across the top of it. From his position the Captain could see a very damaged eagle like figure painted on the side of the hull.

"What ship is that?" He asked one of his junior officers.

"I've no idea sir. I'll check the database but I myself have never seen a ship like that."

Another officer piped up. "Sir she's hailing us."

"Put her through."

The forward view screen showed a younger man wearing a black great coat with a red and gold sash and a black cap covering his short black hair. He had a very ornate wooden pistol holstered on his waist and, the Captain swore he was seeing things but an honest to force sword sheathed on the other side from the pistol.

"Who are you?" The Captain asked sternly.

The man smiled. "Why my dear Captain, I'm Inquisitor August Mortis and the simple fact is you and your ships have been drafted."

The Captain felt chills go over his body and he began sweating buckets. While the special unit of Imperial Intelligence was created only 11 months previously it's members held a very large amount of power over everyone due to their autonomy from the military. They were what Darth Vader was, only they weren't force users. 'Truth Officers', they were called as they never accepted anything less than the truth.

"M-my lord. I didn't expect a member of his Imperial Majesty's Inquisition to be here." Captain Herda mumbled, barely finding the words to speak.\_ And Mortis! Why'd it have to be Mortis?\_

The young man had made a name for himself ever since the events on Kysske when he had put down an entire rebellion with a single shot of his pistol. Rumor had it he had walked up to the rebel leader in plain view of the other rebels, began a civil conversation before shooting the man between the eyes before he could react. That the leader was a Jedi knight often astounded most people.

Mortis smiled again, showing a perfect set of white teeth. "Of course you didn't Captain, no one ever does." He clasped his hands behind his back, still smiling. "The fact of the matter is that there is a rather bothersome ship near the gas giant on the system's edge. Said ship is rather hard to kill and, as you can tell we didn't have the resources to deal with such as ship until you appeared."

"I don't understand, my lord. You want us to hunt it down?"

"Yes."

"Certainly, my lord. We will depart momentarily."

"Good. Update me when you cripple the ship, Leave it intact, Captain. We could learn many things about our opponent."

"Of course, my lord."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lance Corporal Simon Andrews, aboard UNSC<em> Marathon-<em>class cruiser\_ Fire By Rank, \_30 minutes later\*\*

\_Fireteams 13, 34, 54 and 106 head to bulkhead A-14! 35th Tactical rendezvous with 3rd platoon at primary hanger! All teams prepare to repel boarders!" \_My company CO yelled over the comm as we readied near airlocks, hangers and bulkheads.

"Well fuck!" McKenzie muttered as we fortified the area around us. I chuckled as I set up my rifle, the SRS99-S5 sniper rifle feeling like a feather in my hands as I set up the bipod, aiming down the hallway.

"Get ready people. they're cutting through the door!" A regular Marine sergeant yelled. He wasn't lying, a thin cut could be seen going down the middle of the door.

Weapons were checked and loaded and those of us with fully visored helmets polarized to the max to ward off any smoke that may appear.

We held our breath, waiting as the door was finally cut open. As expected smoke filled the corridor and the Marines and Navel crewmen without visors covered their eyes.

We had expected a barrage of weapons fire, a few grenades or to be swarmed with hostiles but the only thing that walked through that door was a young man. He had black hair expertly combed and piercing green eyes. He wore a black great coat with a suit and tie underneath. A sword was sheathed on the left side of his waist and a snub nosed wooden pistol was holstered by his right thigh. No one fired.

The man looked around disapprovingly. I heard the order for a Fireteam to move n and arrest him while the rest of the group covered them. the ships A.I, Sparrow, was able to lock the rest of the hostiles out. It was just one man against an entire ship.

Four Marines advanced on the man, shouting for him to get on his knees and place his hands behind his head. He merely stood there, unmoving.

The first pair of Marines to reach him made to shove him to the ground. As one of the Marines attempted to push him the man shot his arms towards the Marine, he twisted the Marines arm and I heard bones break. The second Marine also made to grab the man but he was kicked In the stomach and punched in the side of the head. He dropped.

The other pair of Marines opened fire but the first Marine was used as a shield by the man before he effortlessly kicked him into his fellows, sending the trio to the ground.

The rest of us opened fire, over a dozen people firing all manner of weapons. SMGs, Rifles, Shotguns. We fired the whole nine yards.

The man had already moved, dashing behind a support column as we fired. I don't think a single round hit him.

A grenade rolled around the column, detonating and obliterating the trio of Marines who were still getting up. Two more grenades came, this time thrown. I ducked as the grenade nearest to me detonated, engulfing three fellow ODST's and an entire Marine fireteam. I had let go of my rifle when I had ran from the grenade and found it was now a mangled mess. There were only four other Marines left standing in the hallway plus my team.

"What the fuck are we dealing with?" One of the Marines asked tensely.

"Don't know. Just kill him." I said, pulling out my M6C sidearm.

"Has he moved from the column?" Derose asked, his rifle trained on the aforementioned support structure.

"I thin—" McKenzie tried to say as her chest exploded in a gory

display of human anatomy. She died before she hit the floor. I watched her hit the ground, my comrade, my teammate...my friend.

The man was peeking out of the column, pistol in hand. The rest of us fired at the column but I realized to late that the man had already closed the distance. He had pulled out his sword and used it to cleanly bisect two of the Marines before they could react, his sword cutting the men in half before he parried a blow from another Marines bayonet. The sword was acting like an Elite Energy Sword!

I fired point blank into the man but missed all shots but one, nicking him in the right arm as he rounded on the Marine holding the bayonet. He punched the Marine in the face, breaking his nose before slashing the man with his sword, ripping open his chest and liquefying his insides. He then turned towards Derose. Derose, panicked, fired all his bullets in an attempt to kill the man but due to his shoddy aim missed all but two of his 12 shots. He died by having his head disconnected from his body, The man smiled coyly as another of my friends died in front of me.

It was just one Marine and me against this man. We stared each other down as I saw the sealed bulkhead the man had come from burst open, black armoured Stormtroopers rushing through. Time seemed to slow down as the one remaining Marine shifted his aim, firing down the corridor as the black clothed man yelled a battle cry as he moved forwards, his sword pointed towards me. I fired but heard the dreadful sound of an empty magazine.

I was out of bullets.

I flipped the gun around, intending to use it as a club. I was dead, I knew it.

He pierced my armour and flesh, the sword burning my insides as I fell to my right side, facing McKenzie's dead, helmeted head. I heard the Marine still firing, still fighting to his last, even so he died. One of the Troopers shot him through the stomach then the head as he pulled the pin of a grenade. The blast engulfed three of the Stormtroopers in fire and shrapnel before all fell silent.

The Stormtroopers moved forwards, heading for the other parts of the ship. I heard the sounds of gunfire from Marine units father away. Hopefully they'd have better luck than us. I checked my person, looking for a grenade or a weapon but, aside from my knife which I was in no condition to use found nothing. I sighed slowly in between heavy breaths.

"Commander Alpha-77 secure this exit then push to their main hanger! Cut them off!" The man yelled to one of the troopers. This trooper held two blaster pistols and had red accents to his otherwise all black armour. His gear was different than the rest, he didn't have that weird half skirt the other troopers had and his helmet was shaped differently than the others. He was most likely a high ranking officer.

The trooper nodded before hurriedly giving hand signals to the rest of the Stormtroopers.

The man kneeled in front of me, his face one of pity as I choked and spasmed. I made a vain reach for my knife but couldn't find the

strength. The man muttered an apology I think. In some unfamiliar tongue before pointing his pistol at my head.

I had already blacked out when he fired.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Lieutenant William Gunther, aboard Marathon class Cruiser <em>Fire By Rank, <em>Hanger 1A\*\*

"Sir! They've cut us off from the primary exit!" A Naval crewman yelled above the sound of blaster and gunfire. William nodded as he surveyed the situation.

"Castle Team suppressive fire! Castle Two, Castle Si-" William winced due to the partial slip up before shaking his head. "Castle Five, on me!" William yelled.

The Imperials had attacked the ship hard and fast and had disabled her before she could properly fight back and so it was up the ship's ground complement to deal with the mass of boarders.

The team of former Beta company Spartans had been heading for the ships primary reactor and engine room to shore up the defenses, unfortunately they were quickly cut off when they had been boarded, consequently they were stuck in the open hanger bay.

Both sides had a literal wall of boxes and crates to hide behind as well as the occasional vehicle or dropship as added cover. It had turned into a stalemate with neither side able to break it.

The Lieutenant quickly confirmed that both Castle Two, Asher and Castle Five, Elizabeth were with him, to his right and behind on his left side respectively before beginning to explain his plan.

"Asher and I will draw their fire and head straight up the middle seeing as we have shields and stronger armour while you- " William pointed to Elizabeth. "-will flank around and target officers and squad leaders. Pick your path and we'll go on your signal."

"What am I supposed to hit them with?" She countered. "I've only got an MA5B."

William turned to stare at the mottled mob of UNSC personnel that composed this portion of the firing line, eyeing a rather burly ODST Gunnery Sergeant hefting an M379 SAW and a Railgun on his back trading fire with an Imperial E-WEB team.

William directed her towards the Sergeant before quickly popping up and firing a quick burst from his own rifle, a BR85HB, at the same E-WEB team, hitting and killing the gunner in the chest and wounding another member of the team in the arm, the Stormtrooper falling to the ground due to the impact where he was finished off by the Gunnery Sergeant.

Less than ten seconds later and Elizabeth was back, Railgun in hand.

William was about to give the order to put the plan in motion when another figure joined their huddle. William heard two Marines mutter

approvingly.

"Holy shit! We've got an S-II guys!" One shouted happily.

"Huh, guess the brass really do give a shit." His companion muttered.

The Lieutenant, meanwhile, eyed the newly promoted Master Chief Petty Officer with confusion.

"What are you doing here?" He asked, turning to face her helmeted head. Her black Mark V helmet with accompanying black visor was oddly unsettling.

"Captain gave me new—" Both SPARTANS flinched as a bolt hit the Spartan II's shields, bathing her armour in a gold glow. "Shooter, on the walkway, left." She sent a trio of shots down range. "Contact down. As I was saying Captain gave me new orders to find and capture an HVT onboard the ship, sir."

"In the middle of a boarding action?" Asher asked.

"Yes."

Asher slowly nodded, preferring to just go along with it instead of argue.

"You'll need to get past these guys before you do anything." William said. "Your welcome to join us."

The Spartan nodded, moving to a better position to enable her to run.

"On your mark, Castle Five." William muttered to Elizabeth who promptly broke off into a sprint on the far right side of the hanger, assisted by the SPI armour she wore and the battle was unseen by the Imperials. William briefly mused that it had been years since the team had worn SPI armour, trading it for the more powerful and better protected MJOLNIR almost as soon as they were pulled from their company. William waited five seconds for Elizabeth to get a good position before he began running, Asher and Elise, the SPARTAN II, in tow.

The three MOLJNIR armoured SPARTANS cut a bloody swath through the Imperial lines, gunning down a number of Stormtroopers who didn't react fast enough.

William and Asher stayed together however Elise almost instantly broke off and headed for the thickest group of hostiles.

William watched as she butchered and massacred those unfortunate enough to get in her way, bones broke and bodies crumpled as the S-II punched, kicked, shot and stabbed her way through over thirty men in less than a minute.

She would fire her M7 SMG to disorient and confuse the troopers before closing into melee range, knife in hand and proceeded to end them with precise strikes to their necks or stomachs before they could retaliate, her speed making her seem like a black blur to those who weren't augmented like William and the rest of Castle.

She grabbed one trooper's E-11 rifle, her knife still inside the struggling trooper's neck as she used him as a shield while hosing his comrades with his own weapon.

Two troopers were downed by head shots while three more were hit in the back or chest. She threw the rifle into another trooper, her augmented strength propelling the weapon like a bullet as it smacked into the white plastoid armour, sending the trooper flying. She dislodged her knife and promptly threw it, hitting another trooper right between the eyes.

William and Asher were just as lethal as the Master Chief Petty Officer, their strikes synchronized like performers of some macabre dance. One would shoot while the other charged, barreling into their target before quickly killing them with point-blank shots, they merely rinsed and repeated the motion, sometimes coming upon an already dead squad leader or officer, their bodies mangled due to being hit by Elizabeth's crack shots with the Railgun.

Within twenty seconds of reaching the Imperial lines the three power armoured Spartans had killed or wounded over seventy five percent of hostiles and had the rest running towards their boarding crafts, chased by the Marines and Naval personnel in the hanger.

William gave the Master Chief Petty Officer a nod of thanks before regrouping with the rest of Castle, their objective the ship's reactor room.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Kevin-G097, aboard enemy stealth corvette, same time<strong>

The ship had moved. Where I wasn't sure but we had moved somewhere. I had guesses, theories but no evidence to prove I was right.

The enemy had left a token force of three men and one woman at the cell block, none of them were armoured and I was beginning to think that maybe the ship's Marine complement had left the ship already. Considering earlier I had heard the sounds of klaxons and anti-ship weapon discharges they had likely boarded another ship.

The four guards were on edge, occasionally glancing towards the cells we occupied.

I heard someone banging on their cell and saw two of the guards, both males, head towards it, muttering curses all the while. I knew what would happen next, if my hunch was right.

One of the guards screamed and struggled with someone while the other fell to the ground, knocked out. A blaster bolt was heard as the two other guards aimed their weapons at the now freed cell members. Two more bolts sounded, flying past my cell and hitting the remaining guards, who both screamed.

\_Finally. \_I thought.\_

A second later and Michael appeared at my cell door. He shot the lock and the door opened. I stepped out, giving Michael a pat on the

shoulder as he handed me the stolen Imperial weapon, a pistol.

"Took long enough, Rapier Three. " I muttered as Sophie, also free and holding an Imperial weapon, shot the lock off Julianne's cell.

"Sorry, sir. We were playing this great game of blackjack, loser had to try and break out." Michael said, smiling.

"Of course, Michael, of course." I said sarcastically. "Four, Two, status?" I asked Sophie and Julianne.

Sophie gave a thumbs up, as did Julianne, however Julianne's nose was bleeding profoundly.

"Two, your nose...you okay?" I asked, pointing. Julianne nodded.

"I'm fine, it's just a little nosebleed." She said.

"Alright, but clean it up." I said, turning towards the entryway, before pausing. "And don't wipe it on your sleeve, please." I heard a small, "aw" from behind my back.

"Anyone know where Emily is?" Michael asked, reliving the two other Imperials of their weapons.

"No. But this guy might." Sophie replied, eying the one knocked out guard. She kicked him in the ribs lightly. For a Spartan, that is.

The guard awoke, his face contorted in pain as Sophie rounded on him.

"Where's our comrade?" She asked, kicking him again.

"I'll never t-Ah! Kriff! You won't break me you freak!" He yelled. Michael nodded before squatting down in front of him.

"See but here's the thing. If you don't tell us we'll kill you, nice and slow. Bit by bit, piece by piece. First we'll start with your eyes, how about your left eye, let's gouge that out shall we." Michael said quietly, evilly.

The man paled as he realized Michael was serious. Michael's smile grew wider. "I'm going to count to three. If you don't tell us where our teammate is by then I start gouging!"

"Carver, Kelad-" The man began.

"One."

"Carver, Kelad, L-Lieut-" The man continued, shaking now.

"Two."

"C-Carver, Kelad, Lieutenant-"

"Three." Michael said. He grabbed a knife from one of the dead bodies

and slowly made for the man's eye. He got with in a centimetre before the man broke.

"Okay, I'll tell you what you want! Please don't!" Michael stopped.  
"She's in the room next door, on the right. She's there I swear it!"

Sophie and Julianne ran off, their stolen weapons ready to fire at a moments notice as they headed for Emily. I turned towards the man.

"Our weapons? Armour?" I asked, crossing my arms.

"In the armoury, down the hall to your left." The man said.

"Thanks." I replied before firing a blaster bolt into his skull.  
"Rapier three, grab our guns but be careful. This is their ship and they probably have cameras or security systems in place." He nodded and headed out. I followed but turned the other way once we were in the main hall, heading to Emily.

I entered the room and wished I had never set foot in it.

She was strapped to a hard metal table, unmoving, still. Her face looked as though she was in immense pain and her body looked to have frozen in place mid thrash. I approached quietly, Julianne and Sophie were attempting to see what was wrong with her, Sophie even trying to get the rest of her armour off by hand to check for injuries.

"What's happened to her?" I asked, my voice barely a whisper. "Is she..."

"No. She's not dead. She's just paralyzed, unconscious. She's been hit with some kind of drug." Sophie said, her voice no louder than mine. "But her body can't take the drug, if I'm reading this right no one should have survived the amount she was given. She should be dead."

"What's keeping her alive?" I asked. Sophie turned to me, her eyes saying it all.

"One of the drugs from the augmentation procedures. The one that cancels out shock and pain."

"We need to get her out of here. Back to the UNSC, to the medics on the ship."

"I don't know if even they can help, I don't even know what she was injected with or if there's a counter...it might be best to just um...to Golf Charlie her, sir."

I recoiled visibly. A Golf Charlie, or Gentlemans Courtesy was the act of quickly and painlessly killing someone who could not be saved. The UNSC found that those severely burned by the Covenant were in extreme pain and often times ended up crippled or dead due to the shock. The only way to relieve that pain was by death. UNSC Medics carried a small needle filled with a fast acting poison that painlessly killed the injectee. No one liked giving it and the

majority that did end up giving the shot often went mad with guilt, committing suicide later on.

"We can still save her!" I yelled. "We don't need to kill her! I won't."

"I didn't say we should do it, just that if there's no other way..." Sophie muttered solemnly, trailing off.

"We should at least try and move her, get off this ship." Julianne stated.

"And we will." Michael said from behind me, carrying all our weapons. "I passed a hanger as I grabbed these. There's almost no one in there bar two of those Stormtrooper guys. There's a shuttle we can use to escape."

"Everyone grab your weapons. Rapier Three, you on point, Two cover the rear. I'll be behind Michael and Four will be behind me carrying Emily. Let's get to it people."

We set off, I was happy to have my DMR back in my hands as we followed Michael to the hanger. We quickly dispatched the two Stormtroopers to pinpoint fire before quickly boarding the shuttle.

"Julie you can fly this right?" I asked.

"Um...yeah. I think." "She replied. "Give me a minute."

"We don't really have a minute." I reminded her. "The ship could be overrun by now."

"Right. Uh, oh wait I got it!" And with that the shuttle lifted off, exiting the hanger rather clunkily and wobbly though we exited. The Marathon was in front of us, it's PDG's firing at fighters and boarding craft as we shot through space.

"Access the comms, all channels and frequencies." I ordered. After a few minutes of trial and error Julianne managed to get it to work.

"Your live, boss."

"This is Sierra-G097 to any UNSC forces. Do you read? Can anyone hear me, over?"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Marathon class cruiser <em>Fire By Rank<em>\*\*

"This is Sierra-G097 to any UNSC forces. Do you read? Can anyone hear me, over?" \_

The bridge crew did a collective double take as the message came through. Captain Fletcher turned to look at the ONI officer beside him who in turn shrugged.

"Sparrow isolate that signal. Lieutenant Awtry ID the ship the

Spartans are in and classify it as friendly. I'd rather not blow up our own people."

"Aye, sir, signal isolated."

"Yes sir. Ship is confirmed green."

"Spartan? You mind telling me what your doing on that ship?" Captain Fletcher asked.

"We escaped a hostile vessel in enemy transport, sir."

"What's your status son?"

"Bad sir. Most of us are Condition Yellow with one Condition Red in need of immediate medical attention."

"Understood. Head for hanger 1A. We've been boarded but that section was cleared minutes ago. We'll have medics on standby."

"Sir. Thank you." The connection ended.

The Captain again eyed the ONI agent, glaring at her like a hawk. "You said they were dead!"

The spook looked hurt for the briefest of moments before she replied. "No. I said they were likely dead. Considering that Fifteen ODST's were dead with no visible enemy casualties sustained the Spartans wouldn't have faired any better."

"And was that fact or an educated guess, Intelligence?"

"A guess but-"

"A guess? Since when do the bodies of Marines decide the fate of a team of Spartans? Not to mention you ordered the ship's best chance for survival on a goose chase!" The Captain was not a fan of ONI, he was pretty sure his crew weren't either. "Sergeant get her off this bridge!"

A rather skinny Marine stepped forwards, his MA5D rifle held loosely in one hand while he grabbed the spook with the other. The Sergeant was about to escort the ONI spook off the bridge before he was blocked by a seven foot tall white EVA armoured Spartan.

"Sir. Castle Four reporting. Permission to enter the bridge?" The Spartan asked curtly, a shotgun held tightly in both hands.

The Captain, and by extension the rest of the bridge crew remained silent, mouths agape.

The super soldier reiterated their question which seemed to pull the officers out of their stupor.

"Good God Spartan. Your armour...why aren't you in Medical?" The captain asked, still surprised. The SPARTAN looked down at her chest armour, where a large hole was visible, displaying the black body suit underneath, before meeting the Captain's gaze.

"Just a scratch, sir. And to answer your question the ship has been

boarded and every other Spartan was busy. I asked the A.I and she stated no Spartan was guarding the bridge. With that said. Permission to enter the bridge...sir?"

The Captain took that information in before nodding. "Granted, Warrant Officer. Take post by the right bulkhead there." The Captain replied. The Spartan nodded before moving into place.

"How are we doing, Sparrow?"

The A.I flickered to life on the nearby pedestal, giving the Spartan a wave in greeting which she returned.

"Two cruiser analogues destroyed or crippled with three remaining in range of the MAC. The rest are holding out of range over the Halo ring. We have sustained minimal damage to decks A23, B12 and F19. Enemy boarders have been routed on all fronts and Marines are mopping up."

"How's our goose chaser fairing?" The Captain asked half heartedly, obviously displeased with the Spartan II's absence.

"She reports that she is backtracking into the maintenance passages and is closing in on her target." Sparrow reported.

"Get me a link to her." He waited as the connection was established. "Master Chief? What's your status?"

\_ "Green, sir. No problems to report." \_Her answer was quick, to the point.

"What do you see down there?"

\_ "Dead Marines." \_There was no emotion in her answer, no anger, sadness. It was merely an answer to a question. The Captain asked, she answered.

Captain Fletcher sighed softly. "Proximity to target?"

\_ "Close sir. Though he's avoided me for the better part of this hunt. I believe he's headed to the bridge, or where he believes the bridge is." \_

It was at that moment that the target kicked open a vent shaft and rolled out, sword and pistol in hand.

The Marines nearest tried to tackle him or bash him with their rifles only to be cut down by the man's cutlass like sword. The Marines and bridge crew farther away opened fire, joined by the Warrant Officer with her shotgun.

The man dodged and weaved, somehow managing to dodge the barrage of projectiles sent his way. He closed the distance on a duo of Marines, decapitating both before rushing the Spartan.

Castle Four, in the midst of reloading her shotgun attempted to use her weapon like a club. Thanks to her augmented strength and reaction time she flawlessly connected with the man's midsection.

However instead of going flying into the nearest bulkhead, as

excepted, he merely doubled over momentarily before tackling Castle Four into a nearby console. Both combatants ferociously attacked each other, each trying to gain the upper hand. The rest of the bridge looked on in awe as both Spartan and Imperial fought tooth and nail.

One of the Marines attempted to fire only to be waved off by the Captain with an exclamation of. "If you fire you could hit the Spartan!" The Marine held their fire, grumbling as they did so.

The man, whoever he was decided that now was the time to leave as he delivered a savage punch to the Spartan's helmeted head, disorienting her and allowing him to break free of the scuffle. He rolled towards the vent shaft he had used to get in.

"Now can I shoot him Captain?" The Marine from before asked, even though he had already started firing. The man successfully evaded the fire and made it into the vents, a duo of Marines leaving the bridge to find him.

Castle Four got up, grabbing her shotgun and checking for damage as she did before turning to the Captain.

"I know what your going to ask and my answer is no. We need you here, Spartan. Besides, MCPO-109 is following him and some other Imperials are still fighting."

"Actually sir your 'goose chaser' as you put it lost the man, as did the Marines. I have camera's showing that he exited with a small squad of Stormtroopers near deck H12, along with the remains of their boarding party. Better luck next time, right?" Sparrow said, the last bit sounding sarcastic.

The Captain sighed audibly before shooting the A.I a glare that could make even a Spartan shake within their armour. "How's Rapier fairing?"

"They've entered the ship and medics are on station. They don't look particularly nice, I can tell you that." Sparrow replied.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SPARTAN Sophie-G317, UNSC <em>Fire By Rank<em> Medbay, 12:35 hrs, July 12 2557/Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"Christ Spartan. Your team was captured by the enemy, shot up, drugged and beaten and all you have to show for it is a couple bruises, a broken nose and a few burns?" The ship's Chief medical officer stated, reading from a nearby chart.

"No ma'am. SPARTAN-G045 is critically injured and paralyzed." I replied, my face displaying no emotion as I recited my teammate's injuries.

After we had landed we had been separated, each going to a different room with a different doctor.

"I meant besides her." The doctor said.

"How is she?" I asked. The doctor, who up until that point had a tired but still visible smile on her face frowned.

"She'll live." The doctor replied. "She'll live."

"But is she okay? What's her condition?" Something's wrong. I thought, frightened.

"Uh...she's in a coma..." The doctor replied slowly, as if stumbling over her words.

I know that! I thought, irritated. Why can't she just say it!

"She hasn't woken up and we can't wake her up...we've tried everything, and I mean everything. She's healthy but she just won't wake up." The doctor said so fast and quietly that if I hadn't had augmented hearing I would have never heard.

"What? What do you mean, she won't wake up!" I yelled, my façade breaking as emotions covered my face. "Let me see her!"

"Failure! Again!" A voice said though I couldn't pinpoint its origin.

The doctor nodded but stood in my way. "I can't. We've already sent her back with the ONI Prowler, you know, the one that just arrived with replacement armour for Castle."

"But she's alive?" I whispered. The doctor nodded.

"I have to go check on the other wounded. If you need help just ask the ship A.I" The doctor said, leaving the room.

I sat on the cot, my head in my hands when I heard the voice again, this time much clearer.

"Failure! You failed!" I looked up, seeing two people that didn't exist.

"You don't exist!" I yelled, throwing a nearby datapad at the two spectres.

"But we do Sophie! We're here, talking to you." The one on the right said. "It's me, Ellie, and Rachel! The others wanted to come but they had other plans." Ellie replied, peeling off her SPI helmet. The other one did the same. It really was Rachel.

"Guess those pills didn't help huh?" Rachel said, a smile plastered on her face. "I made a bet with Sarah about how long you'd take them. I won fifty credits, thanks to you."

"You both died!" I yelled, looking for another thing to throw. I ran over to a nearby cabinet, opening it quickly, occasionally glancing at Ellie and Rachel, neither moved a muscle.

I found a scalpel, turning around to face the duo.

That was when they moved.

Ellie, always the fastest charged me, tackling me into the cot and grabbing my hand holding the knife while Rachel restrained my arms.

"Come with us! Come be with us again!" Ellie said, overpowering me and causing me to nearly slit my throat. I fought back, almost managing to turn the knife on her only to have both disappear as the door opened. my hand was still holding the knife to my throat.

"What the hell are you doing?" The doctor yelled as she paused by the door. "Put the knife down Spartan!"

I did, slowly, amid incoherent babbles about how it wasn't me, it was Ellie and Rachel.

But it the doctor didn't believe me, stating that I was the only one in the room while a marine restrained me, the doctor stating I was a possible danger to others and that I would be forced to stay here until further notice.

"But it wasn't me!" I croaked out. "It was Ellie and Rachel!"

Wasn't it?

\* \* \*

><p><strong>And that's all, folks! I hope you enjoyed reading this chapter as much as I enjoyed writing it!<strong>

\*\*As always thanks to my ever diligent Beta Reader and companion theotherpianist for allowing me to use his characters and for beta'ing this chapter! \*\*

\*\*Please, if you'd be so kind, review. I'd love to hear your thoughts/opinions!\*\*

### 13. Chapter 13: Under Cover Of Night

\*\*Holy \*\*\*\* am I late! \*\*

\*\*This chapter, as well as the next two are going to be flashbacks. The first two are of Rapier's story, the third is Elise's. Note that none of these chapters will be from the character's POV, that is, Rapier's won't be from their POV, Elise's won't be from hers. So yeah, enjoy! :)\*\*

\*\*Not much else to say here, except I'd of course like to thank my wonderful Beta theotherpianist for beta'ing my work and allowing me to use his characters.\*\*

\*\*DONT FORGET TO REVIEW! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Prowler <strong>\*\*\_Twenty Four Seven\_\*\*\*\*, in geosynchronous orbit of New Barbados, 12:34 hrs August 11 2552 /UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

Sara-G209 was nervous as she stared at the planet below. This was the

first real mission Gamma Company was a part of and she was worried they would fail.

Her team, Fireteam Cutlass, alongside Fireteam's Rapier and Foil, had been detached from the mainline company to act as advance scouts. Their target was the former Colony of New Barbados, a lush, tropical oasis that had fallen to the Covenant a month ago and was believed to be a staging area for further attacks on human space.

The alien juggernaut hadn't glassed the planet as was their Modus Operandi but had landed in force, setting up a garrison and killing or capturing the human population while they fortified the planet.

They had slipped in-system a day ago, the ONI commander waiting until there was next to no traffic from Covenant ships before orbiting the planet. Now the Prowler's crew were getting ready to launch fifteen SPARTAN III's from their recently added SOIEV Bay.

"You okay Sara?" A voice asked from behind her, causing the young Spartan to jump in surprise.

Sara turned to find the leader of Fireteam Foil, Jake-G006 armoured completely in his SPI Mark II armour minus his helmet, which he clutched under his right arm.

Sara nodded, turning back towards the window overlooking the planet. Jake, however, knew she was lying.

"I'm being serious Sara. What's wrong?" He pressed, standing beside her as she leaned on the railing.

"Nothing. I'm fine." She replied quickly. "Just nervous."

Her male companion nodded. "Me to."

"Why are you in armour?" Sara asked, changing the subject. "We don't drop for another two hours." Unlike Jake, she only wore her regulation fatigues and combat boots.

"Thought I'd get it on early. Don't worry no one else has their's on so you won't look out of place." He seemed to want to say more but stopped.

Sara gave him a quizzical look and motioned him to continue.

"Though if I were you I'd put the armour on now anyway, cover up your scar...and your hair." Sara shoved him lightly and he put his hands up defensively.

Unlike the other members of her team who were mainly wound free Sara's retina in her left eye detached leaving her blind in that eye due to something happening during her birth. As the records were lost with the fall of her colony she had no idea what had caused the retina to detach. While she looked normal with no wound visible Jake teased her to no end about it though he meant no ill intent.

Her hair, on the other hand, was black with green streaks running through it, something she knew Jake disliked.

"Why do you hate my hair?" Sara asked playfully.

"Because. It gives away your position for miles around." He replied.

"Though I didn't come out here to joke about your hair." He sighed.

"They've started fighting again."

Sara chuckled. "And?"

"They're your team. And Kevin won't do anything." Jake replied, annoyed.

"Of course not. Who was it this time? One of mine?"

"Naw. It was Michael. He got into an argument with Kyle over how best to deal with a charging opponent and it kind of snowballed from there."

Sara sighed as she left the window and headed back to the Spartan's quarters, Jake close behind. "Who threw the first punch?"

"Kyle." Jake replied.

"Great." Sara stated as they came upon their quarters. The door opened and Sara was about to walk in when Kyle slid up to the wall, hitting it.

"What are you doing?" Sara asked Kyle as he nursed a bruise on his arm.

The Spartan III stood up quickly when he heard his superior's voice, coming to attention.

"Nothing Ma'am...just having an argument." He stated quickly. Kyle-G157 followed rules and regulations the most out of the group, calling Sara or the other Fireteam leaders 'Ma'am' or 'Sir' whenever he spoke to them. Though he almost always got into a fight with Rapier's demolitions expert, Michael over something or another.

"Right. Where's Kevin?" Sara asked, looking around the room, finding everyone minus Rapier's leader present.

"Getting his armour on, Ma'am." Kyle said. The other occupants of the room, Brian-G034, Rachel-G267, Ellie-G056 of Fireteam Cutlass, Sara's team, Cole-G107, Russell-G303 and Elizabeth-G330 of Fireteam Foil, Jakes team nodded, Rapier also nodded.

"Brian, Rachel. Go get him." Sara said. The two Sparans nodded and went off. "Kyle, Michael, come here."

Both Spartans shared a look but complied nonetheless.

When they reached her Sara began her lecture.

"Kyle." The Spartan looked expectedly. "You shouldn't have thrown a punch over a stupid issue like that!" She punched him in the gut, causing him to double over in pain.

Michael snickered before Sara rounded on him. "And you shouldn't have continued to fight!" She yelled, also punching him in the gut.

"I don't need my Spartans in stitches right before a mission and certainly not this one! Smarten up, both of you before you get us all killed!" Sara yelled, causing every Spartan present to flinch. "Am I clear?"

Kyle and Michael nodded as they nursed their bruises and checked their ego's. Sara wasn't convinced. "AM I CLEAR!"

Every Spartan in the room yelled in the affirmative.

"Good. Now armour up. When everyone's here we're gonna go over every single piece of Intel we have, be it the drop zone, enemy forces, rules of engagement or the objective. Am I clear?"

The rooms occupants nodded or gave a verbal answer of "Yes Ma 'am!"

"Perfect."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Prowler Twenty Four Seven, 14:30 hrs, August 11 2552UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

The fifteen drop pods shot out of their launch bays towards the planet below.

As the pods descended through the atmosphere Sara-G209 ran through the mission objectives once again in her head.

First the teams were to secure a base of operations for extended deployment overlooking their target area, a Covenant mining operation extracting valuable metals for their war effort, as the rest of the company wouldn't be on station for two weeks.

Second they were to recon and scout out the Covenant positions, guard posts, shift details, weapon emplacements and targets of opportunity for attack with the rest of Gamma when they arrived. A trivial and easy objective, considering that collectively the three teams were the best at recon in the company.

Third was for the teams to disrupt the Covenant in anyway possible using guerrilla tactics and snatch and grab attacks. To accomplish this with the limited ammo they had they were to commandeer hostile weapons and grenades and use them instead of their UNSC armament, much to the distaste of Rapier's sniper, who had something of a dislike of plasma weaponry, though she would use them just as she would a UNSC weapon.

Sara, on the other hand could care less about what type of weapon she used, so long as the Covvie bastard she pointed it at died she would be happy.

As her pod broke through the cloud layer she saw the capital and the only city on planet, Colony Cove. Around the city was thick jungle and on one side a crystal clear turquoise ocean. It was picturesque, a blending of nature and civilization.

Or it had been.

The orbital elevator had fallen, crushing the city it fell on, while smoke still came from extinguished fires all over the city. Parts of the jungle were razed to the ground and the water nearest to the shore had turned a dark shade of brown or green.

Sara saw an Albatross dropship sticking out of one of the skyscrapers, smoke still bellowing from the wreck.

She also saw a Covenant spire sticking out of the ground, its presence causing the eleven year old Spartan to grip her pod controls tighter, anger briefly causing her to blink rapidly, as if trying to tell herself that this structure didn't exist, that it was a mirage.

Her blinks caused a flurry of HUD options to turn on and off, which she had to clear before she could see the structure again.

When her pod touched down she momentarily lost vision completely before she popped the explosive bolts on the door, sending the door flying forwards and smashing into the heavily rubble strewn street.

She he stepped out quickly, Suppressed M7 aimed outwards in her left hand while she braced on the pod with her right.

Her SPI armour flickered momentarily as it struggled to blend in to the environment. The young Spartan III hurriedly grabbed her supplies and made for the nearest cover, a former storefront. She made it through the door, looking back at her pod momentarily before focusing on securing the building.

All of this, from the moment her pod touched down to the moment she entered the store happened within the span of ten seconds.

She went through the building, all two floors in little under a minute when the rest of Fireteam Cutlass came though the back door.

"Sitrep?" Sara asked her team as they congregated on the second floor landing.

"Cutlass Two, ready." Ellie replied, her SMG held one handed pointed upwards in her left hand while her right hand braced on her hip. Her stance was one of complete cockiness, something Sara disapproved of.

"I'm green." Brian stated flatly, his suppressed MA5K resting on the bannister.

"I'm itching for action, Ma'am!" Kyle more or less yelled, leaving Sara thankfull that the team operated on a secure frequency. He also made a show of cocking his M90A shotgun, leaving Sara wishing not for the first time he was on another team.

"I'm also green, boss." Rachel stated As she sweeped the area, her DMR customized for longer range engagements.

All of them wore SPI MK II armour, the trademark of SPARTAN III units everywhere. Though their's bore some minuscule differences.

Specifically that theirs had specialized cooling units that increased their camouflage's effectiveness and longevity as the units would fail or even completely shut down with prolonged use. They also had opted to add a dark grey trim to their otherwise completely sage coloured armour. Each team chose a different colour, Cutlass was grey, Rapier was olive and Foil was blue. As such if they ever needed to they could use Red, Blue and Green call signs instead of their team names.

"Status on the other teams?" Sara asked.

"Rapier landed farthest away, a solid ten Klick's thata' way." Ellie stated pointing with her SMG. A NAV marker appeared in Sara's HUD. "Foil landed closer, about two blocks due east, right in the middle." another NAV marker.

"And the objective?"

"Rapier found a good OP for us. One of the remaining apartments that hasn't fallen down yet, top floor, penthouse." Kyle added.

"I've always wanted a penthouse." Rachel stated dreamily.

"Well then Rachel I guess you get your wish." Brian muttered, shouldering his rifle and starting down the stairs.

"Alright guys don't get cocky." Sara stated, looking directly at Ellie who, after repolarizing her visor acted hurt. "Your such a baby. Come on Cutlass, Rapier picked the spot so we pick the schedule. Dispersion pattern Alpha. Move."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC Colony New Barbados, 15:45 hrs, August 11 2552UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

The bombed out room that was serving as the groups Observation Point smelled of scorched wood and burned flesh even now, a solid month after the colony fell.

The three teams deduced that the body was female, age six, cause of death had been a plasma discharge.

The child's former room was missing a wall, covered in rubble and open to the elements. Her furniture had been wooden and as such had burned to cinders that had long been extinguished. Sara positioned herself on the bed, the watered frame creaking under her weight.

The rest of Cutlass was carrying the body, it's charred appearance making Sara once again flare up in anger. Her fists clenched and unclenched rapidly and her eyes watered.

Foil filed through, oblivious to the scene and set up the OP. Rapier secured the rest of the floor. Aside from the removal of the body it was textbook.

None of the three teams had had any contact with the enemy and, atleast for now, Sara wanted to keep it that way.

Rapier appeared at the door, their postures showing they were

uneasy.

"Status?" Kevin asked flatly as he walked into the room.

"We're alive, as you can see." Jake replied as he lay prone, looking through archaic 21st binoculars. Kevin looked surprised to see the old and, with regards to their other scopes, useless tool.

"Why the old scope?" He asked, gesturing toward the binoculars.

"Family heirloom?"

"You'd know if they were." Jake said without looking up. "Found 'um in an antique store on our way here. They looked cool so I grabbed them."

"Grab anything else?" Sara wondered aloud.

"Not me though Cole grabbed a sword or something."

"A sword?" Michael asked, looking up.

"Yeah. A Scimitar or something."

"It isn't just any Scimitar!" Cole said, overjoyed as he cradled his newly found weapon. "It's a jewel encrusted gold embroidered 15th century officers Scimitar. Don't speak about things you know nothing about...sir."

Michael rushed to Cole's side, intent on seeing the sword for himself as Cole and rapier walked out of the room, followed closely behind by Sara. The rest of Cutlass had disposed of the body during Cole's rant.

"Give it to Lola when Scimitar makes landfall." Sara said. Cole shot an unseen look at her through his polarized visor as he sat on one of the worn out couches in the living room.

"Oh come on! We all know how you look at her." Rachel stated, sharing a chuckle with the females present.

"Well at least I have someone special!" He yelled in mock sadness.

"Is that the best you can come up with?" Emily asked, unimpressed as she took off her helmet and lounged on the second of the three couches, leaving the rest of the group to stand or take a knee.

"Let me think about that for a second...no. This is." Cole stated as he grabbed one of the cushions beside him and threw it at Emily. The cushion, a small, sad white pillow in a somewhat square shape hit the young sniper in the head, leaving her dazed as Rachel picked up a nearby cushion, throwing it at Cole.

The rest of Rapier and Cutlass barring their respective leaders soon formed teams amounting to girls versus boys as they began smacking each other with the pillows.

Emily, in contrast to her role as a sniper ran at Cole with a pillow, knocking him to the ground she began beating him over the head with the soft cushion.

"That's for hitting me in the head you idiot!" She yelled inbetween strikes.

Cole, for his part held his hands out to protect his face. "Ow, ow! Okay okay! I get it stop!" He yelled though Emily persisted. "I get it! Stop already godamnit! Ow!"

Kevin appeared from the child's bedroom, with a look to stop the fight however Sara held out her hand, halting his step.

"Leave them." Sara said. "Let them have this moment."

"But the mission-"

"This may be the last time we can do this, together. We have all of two weeks to worry about the mission. Don't take this away from them, from me." Sara stated, picking up a pillow when Kevin wasn't looking.

True to her talent he didn't see the strike until it was to late.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>UNSC colony New Barbados, 05:00 hrs, August 13 2552UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

"Hey Sophie your shifts over. You can go get some...oh." Sara started to say as she entered the room, cup of MRE issue coffee in her hands when she saw Rapier's medic draped over Brian, asleep.

Both were helmet less and a thick wool blanket covered both of them though Brian was still awake. He tried to move though Sara wordlessly stopped him, shaking her head.

"How'd this happen Cutlass Three?" Sara asked as she sat down next to the pair.

"I couldn't sleep, ma'am." He stated. Sophie, whether as a reflex or that she could hear the two muttered something unintelleglbe.

"I know that. Your an insomniac to the core. I meant this." Sara stated, gesturing at Sophie draped over Brian.

"She was tired ma'am, she kinda just dropped. Cute isn't it?"

Sara nodded. "Kevin wouldn't be happy to find out."

"No, he wouldn't be. Can you not tell him?"

"Was about to ask you the same thing, Three." Sara smiled meekly. She looked at her coffee, "Want some? It's fresh...or as fresh as MRE coffee can be."

"No thanks. I prefer tea." Sara snorted.

"You won't find tea out here."

"I know. But Julianne found some in another apartment. I've been sharing with Sophie." He said, holding up a mug that had previously

been out of Sara's view.

"Julianne let you take from her stash? She guards that stuff like a hawk. It's scary, honestly."

"Yeah. Sophie knows how to sneak it past her. She'd make a good thief. Julianne didn't even know she's taken some."

"And your the expert, are you?" Sara asked.

"Well when your parents are drug addicts who don't care about you and act like you were a piece of trash yeah. You pick up a few things you normally shouldn't."

Sara nodded silently, absent-mindedly flicking the safety of her MA5K on and off.

Sophie stirred, opening her eyes she saw Sara who, upon seeing Sophie awake gave a half hearted wave.

"Where...oh, I fell asleep! Sorry Sara!" Sophie stated, her face showing she was blushing and shying away from her superior.

"Don't worry about it. We all need rest. Besides no one was hurt." Sophie relaxed. "But if you ever do it again I will have you reprimanded! Clear?"

"Clear."

"Good. Dismissed. Go get the rest of my team up will you, It's time to go hunting."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Former UNSC colony New Barbados, 01:00 hrs, August 13, 2552UNSC Military Calendar/Military Standard Time\*\*

The fifteen SPARTANS of Gamma Company had had their first real taste of combat against the Covenant. They had ambushed a mechanized patrol of three ghosts and a wraith a day ago. Overall the S-III's weren't impressed.

The Covenant column had no air cover, minimal infantry screening and only one officer, an Elite inside the tank.

Thanks to the camouflage offered by the SPI armour the Spartans wore the column was destroyed without any return fire from the Covenant, the members of Rapier planting demo charges on the Wraith as it passed while the Ghosts were taken out by precise anti-material sniper fire from a few buildings manned by Rachel and Cole and the infantry were stormed by the remainder of the teams.

The aliens had been so flabbergasted and stupefied that they had watched in shock as the Spartan mirages butchered them all.

Sara had thought she heard one of the Jackal foot soldiers call them 'ghosts' as it squawked into its radio before she tore its guts out with an augmented fist. The resulting blood spray covered her armoured form. Sara cleared her golden visor of Jackal blood in disgust while Kevin and Jake went over what they had learned.

They had found overheard orders to the Elite that this area had to be secure for the removal of 'the artifact'...what ever that was. This 'artifact' would be taken through this area from the outskirts by convoy to the main building, the spire in the city centre.

The teams agreed they would need more information and split up to find and interrogate enemy officers. That was what they were currently doing. The members of Fireteam Cutlass were swiftly moving through the rubble, tailing an Elite patrol.

The patrol was only Elites, three, to be exact. two Majors and an Ultra at the head.

The team had spread out into two smaller units. Sara, Ellie and Kyle were team one, they would rush the elites while team two, Brian and Rachel would provide covering fire from above, perched in one of the many ruined buildings around the Elites.

\_ "Cutlass on my mark." \_Sarah said as she moved to the next peice of cover, the worn out window of a salon, the Spartan III flicked the safety off of her MA5K, waiting for the rest of her team to get in position.

She received four green acknowledgement lights from her team in return and without remorse gave the order.

\_ "Mark!" \_

Rachel and Brian fired their suppressed rifles, killing the two Majors with a headshot each while the rest of Cutlass vaulted the window and tackled the Ultra who was in the midst of getting to cover.

Ellie got to it first, the twelve year old girl lunged at it, causing it to lose balance and fall to the rain covered ground. To fast for anyone to see the Spartan had her knife out and sticking through the Elite's arm, pinning it to the ground.

Sarah and Kyle grabbed one end of the Elite, carrying it to the storefront and then down a back alley while Ellie grabbed the Elite's weapons, two plasma rifles, a carbine and an energy sword.

The Elite was spouting religious themed insults at the team of SPARTANS and Ellie seemed on edge, something the rest of the team quickly picked up on.

"Cutlass Two, you okay?" Rachel asked her friend as they handed out the weapons, Rachel grabbing the carbine while Kyle, as always grabbed the energy sword.

"I'm fine. It's just nerves." She replied.

Sarah tuned them out and ripped the Elite's helmet off, denying it communication with its superiors and drenching it in rain.

"Now here's how this is going to go." Sarah started to say while the rest of the team, armed with their new Covenant weapons secured the alley. "We need information and you have that information. Your gonna tell us that information or we're going to kill you, nice and slow,

bit by bit, Okay?" Sarah said as though she were talking to a child, there was a small bit of irony there considering she was only eleven years of age herself.

"I will tell you nothing Demon! The Gods will embrace me with open arms-!"

Sarah twisted the combat knife still embedded in the Elite's arm, eliciting a blood curling roar of pain. She then proceeded to shoot it in its right foot. "Talk!" She yelled.

"Nev-" Ellie punched the Elite in the jaw, winding it before kicking it in the ribs.

"Listen closely you alien fuck. You killed my parents, my family and billions of others. Your death will be slow and excruciatingly painful, tell us what we want however and you'll die quickly. I promise on my Honor." She said, her words dripping with menace.

"I will die before I talk!" The Elite shot back.

"Oh really?" Ellie countered, before proceeding to gouge the Elite's right eye out.

Sarah was unsettled by this and wondered if Ellie had neglected to take her smoothers again. A point she would need to address if that was the case.

"Cutlass Two, back to your post. I'll deal with this." Sarah said quietly, placing her hand on Ellie's armoured shoulder. The Spartan III didn't move for a brief second before nodding and walking back to her original position.

"Talk!" Sara continued, punching the Elite in the stomach. "What is this artifact we keep hearing about?"

"A creation of the gods! A most holy of instruments! You shall not defile it!" While the Elite was spewing religious babble often times they gave pieces of information unintentionally, that was the first piece of the puzzle. Whatever the artifact was it had religious value to the Covenant.

"What is it? What does it look like?" Sara pressed, twisting the Elite's upper right mandible. It howled in pain.

"A gem of light in the blackest of darkness! The thing that will bring about your destruction!"

That was the second piece. It was a weapon, or at least the Elite thought it was a weapon.

"Where is it located?" Sara once again asked.

"I will not say! You shall not force me!"

Sara was wondering what else she could damage to make the Elite talk when Jake cut in over comms.

\_"Rapier, Cutlass...we've found it, I think." \_

Sara smiled under her helmet and responded quickly. "You think?"

"It's in a convoy, over two dozen hostile infantry with armoured support." —

Kevin butted in. "Do you have eyes on the artifact itself?" —

"Negative, though with this much armour and infantry I don't know what else it could be. They're also heading to the Spire, ETA one hour at the pace they're going currently." Jake replied. "Recommend we RV and attack in synch." —

"Agreed. Foil shadow the convoy and wait for us to catch up." —Sara replied before turning to her team. "Cutlass prepare to move out. We have a rendezvous to meet and I don't want to be late!"

As the team made way to the RV Ellie casually snapped the Elite's neck as she walked by, the sound almost unheard due to the rain. She also retrieved her knife, sheathing it quickly.

"See? Nice and quick." She said to Sara as she caught up to the rest of the team.

No one answered her as they simultaneously activated their photo-reactive panels, disappearing into the rain, heading towards the objective, individually they all wondered what it was exactly they were retrieving, some hoping it was a weapon, others hoping it was nothing more than a piece of old stone or metal.

Sara couldn't care what it was, so long as the Covenant couldn't use it against the UNSC. With that in mind she doubled her pace, stopping as a crack of thunder lit up the dark sky and lighting bathed the city in white.

The Spartan III turned momentarily, facing her team, now nothing more than mirages at this point due to their armour's abilities.

"Everyone good?" — She asked over a private channel.

They all nodded happily, Rachel, the best with words answered in the affirmative.

"Good." Sara replied, confident in her team's abilities to complete the task at hand. She pulled the bolt back on her MA5K, making sure a round was chambered.

"Let's get to work."

End  
file.